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Robert W. Williams
1991

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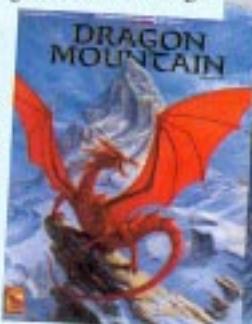
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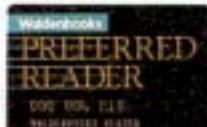
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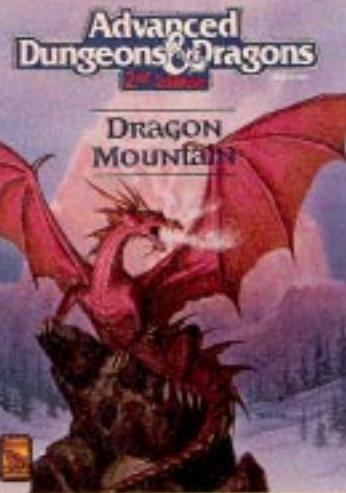
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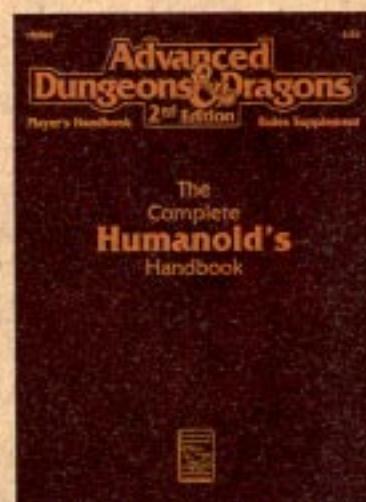
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James M. Ward

Editor
Roger E. Moore

Associate editor
Dale A. Donovan

Fiction editor
Barbara G. Young

Editorial assistant
Wolfgang H. Baur

Art director
Larry W. Smith

Production staff
Gaye O'Keefe Tim Coumbe

Subscriptions
Janet L. Winters

U.S. advertising
Cindy Rick

U.K. correspondent
and U.K. advertising
Wendy Mottaz



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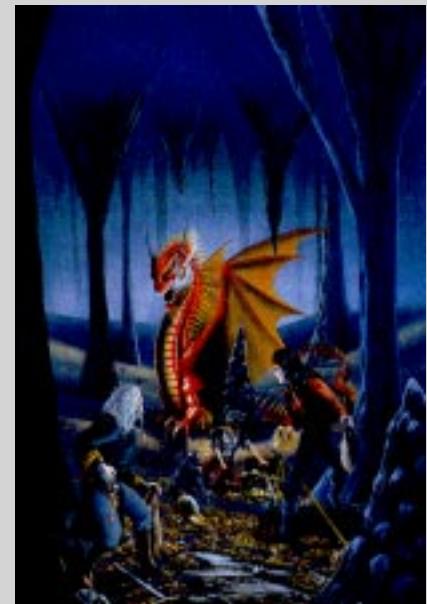
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LETTERS

What did you think of this issue? Do you have a question about an article or have an idea for a new feature you'd like to see? In the United States and Canada, write to: Letters, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Letters, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

Lost souls found

Dear Dragon,

I read "Role-playing Reviews" in DRAGON issue #186 with a lot of enthusiasm. I would like to say that I share Lester Smith's opinion regarding his enjoyment of a "smorgasbord of games." For example, in two conventions that took place in Rio de Janeiro, everybody ran GURPS* or AD&D® games, while I was running CALL OF CTHULHU*, IT CAME FROM THE LATE, LATE, LATE SHOW*; TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE*; and TALISLANTA* games (which are almost unknown to the general public in my country).

Now, you must already have guessed why I am writing to you. I am hungry for new role-playing systems, and the games Lester Smith reviewed seemed very interesting. I would like to ask for the addresses of the companies that produced the LOST SOULS* and AQUELARRE* games if you have them.

Lisandro Gaertner
Rio de Janeiro, BRAZIL

Lester Smith was able to produce both addresses. The LOST SOULS game is available from Sage Lore Publications. You can write to it at: Sage Lore Pub., P.O. Box 14616, Portland OR 97214, U.S.A. The AQUELARRE game is produced by JOC International, S.A.; Sant Hipòlit, 20; 08030 Barcelona; SPAIN.

Ugly stereotypes

Dear Dragon,

I'm writing this letter concerning the stereotype of people who play role-playing games. My cousin saw a show on TV about people who role play. The show said absurd things, like people who play role-playing games kill cats.

I normally play at my grandmother's house, and sometimes I leave my books over there. Some of her friends comment on how "dangerous" and "unsafe" role-playing is.

I'm 13 years old and have been playing for two years. I've never killed a cat, and I have no mental problems. People seem to think just because one deranged person played and did something stupid, everyone who plays is either insane or heading there.

I just wrote this letter because of my concern that this society is getting locked into the state of mind that things people don't understand are wrong.

Eddie Wolf
Bridgeville PA

I know a lot of people who love to role-play and also love cats, and they ever heard the rumor that gamers are cat-killers, they'd smack the rumor-monger with a 50-lb. bag of kitty litter. Seriously, many role-playing gamers are forced to put up with stupid rumors and ignorant beliefs like the ones you cite, and often there isn't much anyone can do about it. Many of those people who think that role-playing is evil are unlikely to be persuaded otherwise, particularly if this idea is connected to their religious beliefs. The best you can do is to realize that this is America, after all, and they have as much right as you do to think what they want. Just try to ignore them.

However, there are some things you can do to help the situation. Perhaps the best thing, as has been pointed out by other writers in this magazine, is to talk to those concerned about role-playing and invite them to watch a typical game as it's played. In many cases, this has quickly settled an anxious parent's mind and relieved the stress on everyone; in a few cases, it has even led to having the onlookers (even parents) become regular gamers. Openness is the best policy.

Showing people what gaming is like and what it's all about is a great way to short-circuit the spread of asinine rumors about us. Let us know if this works.

(P.S. You aren't the only one who is concerned about unfounded prejudice, but any discussion of this topic will quickly leave the gaming field and spread into other current-events areas. It's always best to check the facts and listen to the other side before coming to any conclusions, but sadly this isn't a popular habit.)

Our fastest answers are: English and 13 others, and yes.

A more complete answer for your first question is: English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Hebrew, Portuguese, Danish, Finnish, Swedish, Norwegian, Dutch, Japanese, and Mandarin Chinese. Games in some of these languages are no longer available.

As for your second question, we have published a number of articles giving ideas on how to design your own AD&D adventures for home use. Most offer advice on particular aspects of adventure creation, such as designing good villains, rather than on the process as a whole. We recommend you look for copies of the AD&D 2nd Edition rules supplements Campaign Sourcebook and Catacomb Guide and Creative Campaigning, which contain loads of step-by-step information on adventure-making.

Unfair! Unfair!

Dear Dragon,

Throughout the 10 years that I have been involved with role-playing games, the most common complaint that has arisen is that the Dungeon Master is unfair. The problem, it seems, is that the DM in question realizes that he is biased against or is harshly unfair toward the player characters.

The following is a simple test for a DM to see if he is indeed unfair. As a DM, if you have heard one or more of the following quotes from your players there is a chance that you have been slightly unreasonable:

"Until now, I didn't think arch-devils traveled in groups."

"I missed with a natural 20?"

"I didn't think anything did 40-400 points of damage."

"We should have become farmers."

"I didn't even know that Zeus was mad at me."

Michael A. Vidra
Pittsburgh PA

We enjoyed this letter so much that we will gladly print any other "You might be an unfair DM if you hear these" quotes that readers would care to send to us.

Cow errata

Attentive TSR game editor Karen Boomgarden was quick to point out that in DRAGON® issue #191, page 11, the reference to piebald "common milk cows" in entry 11 of Table 1 would have been better as "Holstein cows," since common milk cows also include the Guernsey, Brown Swiss, etc. "I'm probably being overly sensitive and picky," she wrote in her note to the editors, but we are in Wisconsin, after all, and we should know our cows. We apologize for the error.

What's your opinion?

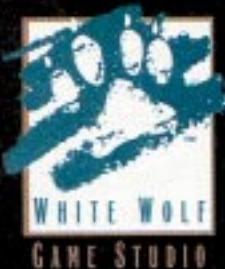
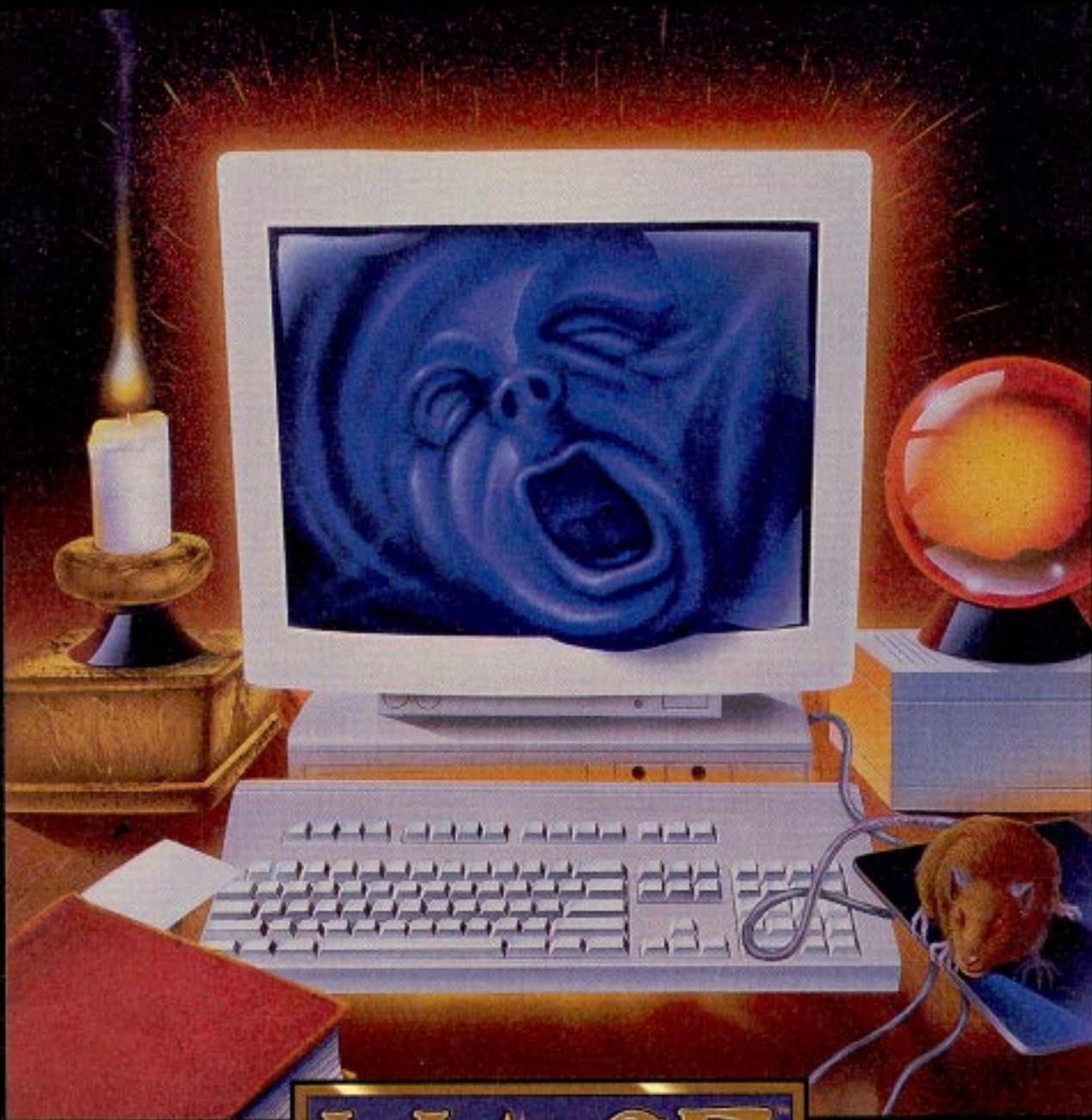
What is the future direction of role-playing games? What problems do you have with your role-playing campaign? Turn to this issue's "Forum" and see what others think—then tell us what you think!

CONNECT 14.4

EMAIL ADDRESS: COR@myrddin.cmu.edu

I know you're there, Corliss; I'm beginning to find my way around in here. Congratulations: I fell right into your trap. Though I distrust technology, even I use the phone. I didn't expect such audacity from a Virtual Adept. Technomancy has indeed matured - now you create realms within these abominations.

But it's so cold in here. Lifeless. Did you program this Abyss just for me? It won't work. You can't break me. I'll tell you noth <BREAK>
C:\PAIN>RUN TORTURE V13.5



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The lesson of the dinosaurs (a story for parents)

May 31st of this year is the tenth anniversary of my joining TSR, Inc. That reminds me of a little story, which I will tell here with a suitable moral for all parents and parental-wannabes:

The real roots of my joining a fantasy game company can be traced back to a severe childhood trauma inflicted upon me by my mother, who in 1959 or so turned off the TV in the middle of Walt Disney's *Fantasia*, right at the point where the allosaur was chewing the guts out of the stegosaurus, because she said it would give me bad dreams. My anguished cries came to naught; I had to go to bed. My psyche was permanently damaged. I took an oath then (about age 4) that I would never give up dinosaurs or anything else I liked, especially dinosaurs. Years later, when I was able to see *Fantasia* in the theater, I was so excited to see the allosaur chew the guts out

of the stegosaurus that I had a religious experience and almost missed the rest of the film. (The film wasn't as much fun after the dinosaurs died out, though.)

When my son John was born, I made up my mind that my kid was going to be exposed to every dinosaur there was, in every form of media from wall poster to plastic toy to movie video. I took him to Dynamation exhibits with robotic dinosaurs, recorded TV specials about the discoveries of new dinosaurs, dressed him in T-shirts showing glow-in-the-dark dinosaurs, fed him dinosaur-shaped candies and pasta, and found dinosaur model kits, audio tapes, pop-up books, and underwear for his gifts. We even went to the infamous

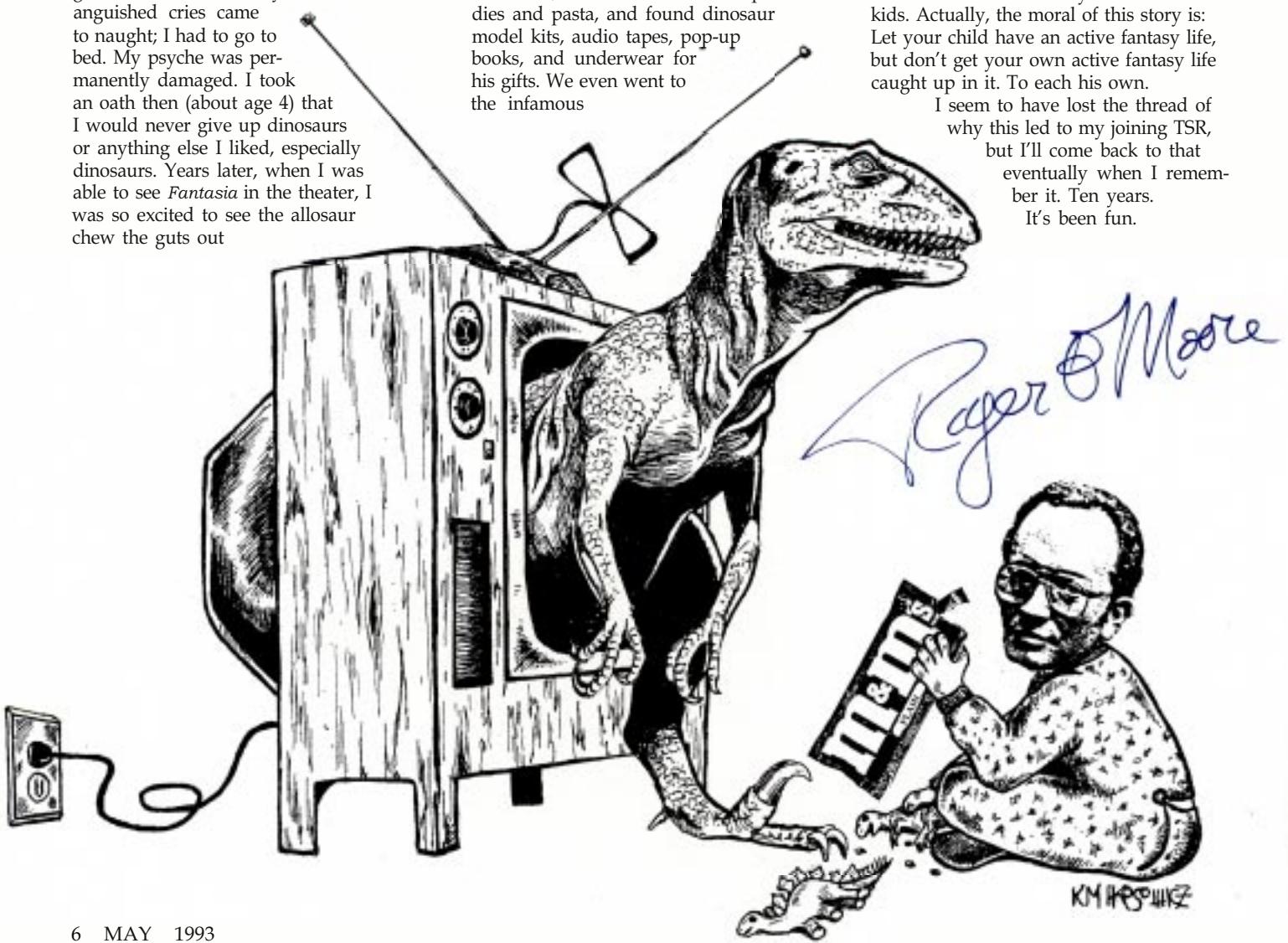
life-size diorama exhibit at the Milwaukee Public Museum, in which a growling tyrannosaurus is shown chewing the guts out of a dead three-horned dinosaur, and my son yelled "Cool!" and tried to climb up on the diorama to look in the tyrannosaurus's mouth.

You're thinking, "So you finally got your way, huh, Mister Traumatized Editor?" Wrong. After all the years I spent filling my son's head with dinosaurs, he dumped almost all of it for Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Man, I hate those things.

The moral of this story is: Don't have kids. Actually, the moral of this story is: Let your child have an active fantasy life, but don't get your own active fantasy life caught up in it. To each his own.

I seem to have lost the thread of why this led to my joining TSR, but I'll come back to that eventually when I remember it. Ten years.

It's been fun.



A graduation card featuring a green banner with handwritten text and a large, bold, purple 'Congrats' in the center. The banner text reads: 'Dad, I need more time to go around with you. But you've been doing great. I'm taking over. Your other son, (Bud)'.

Roger,
Death to U!
Jim Head!

Wor, 10² TEP₂ 10² 0² must be
done

Congrats!
Sister
Lorraine

✓ ✓
Ten years, and you'll just
learned how to take a
vacation! Congratulations!
Barbara
Lee

1997
227

the Regal!
W. J.

Congratulations!
Rick

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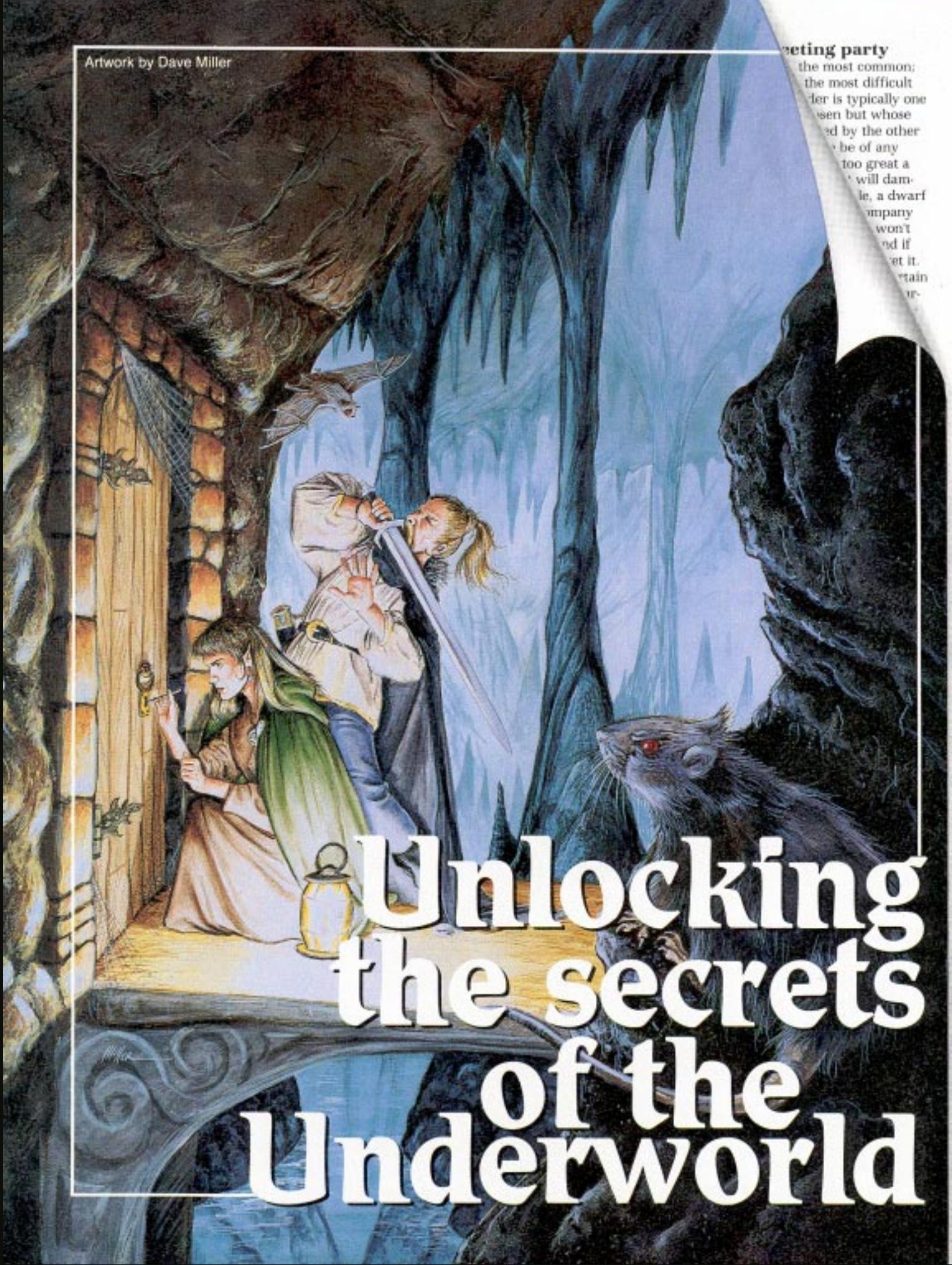
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MAGAZINE

Artwork by Dave Miller

eting party

the most common; the most difficult order is typically one given but whose reward by the other may be of any size, too great a reward will damage a dwarf company, won't mind if it gets it. -stain



Unlocking the secrets of the Underworld

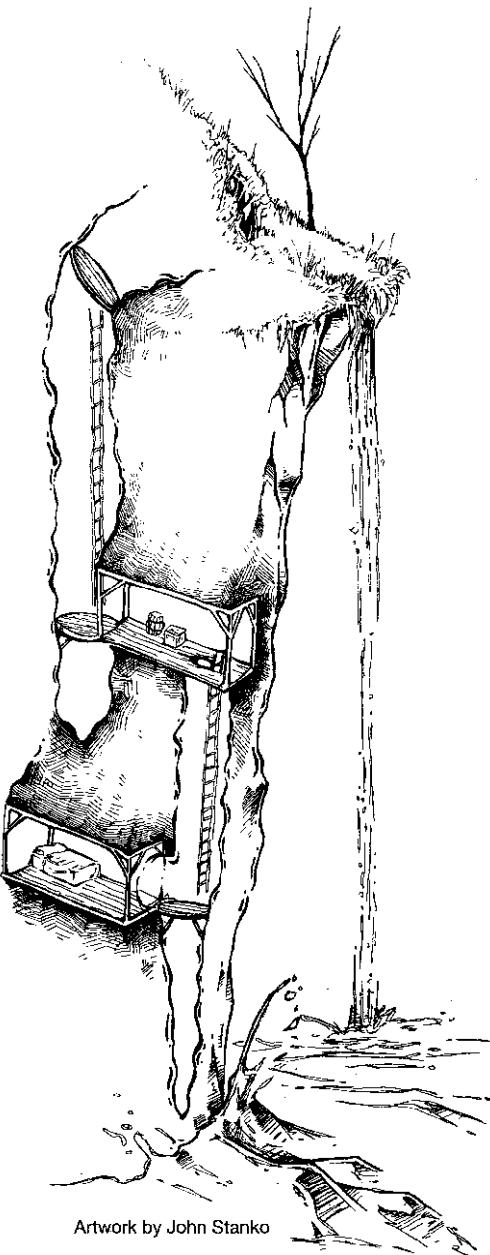
DUNGEONEERING 101



Advice for fledgling dungeon-crawlers

by Steven E. Schend

Illustration by Jeff Easley



Artwork by John Stanko

So, you wonder what it's like bein' an adventurer, eh? I used to be one. Didn't know that about ol' Essimuth, did you? I was one of the best when it came to ferretin' out traps in a dungeon, large or small. Thirty years I worked all manner of dungeons—for myself, the king, or any hedge-wizard that needed a trinket or two. Lucky my career lasted as long as it did, 'til I was surprised by an owlbear that came along and took my right leg with him. Never be so dazzled by greed to let yourself get distracted from the danger.

"Wish you could see a dungeon for yourself? Well, you know how to look for things like monster markings? You know

the signs of a heavily guarded lair? How to find dwarven traps and disable 'em? Easiest way to bungle dart traps? There's a lot you gotta learn about what you might run into down in the warrens, caverns, dungeons, and labyrinths of the Realms. . . ."

The latest visitor to my TSR office cubicle has been Essimuth, a peg-legged storyteller and intrepid dungeoneer. In his visits over the past 18 months, he's given me material that will be incorporated in this article; I've simply written it up as he told it to me. He thinks I'm an oddly dressed wizard or priest writing a book. Even though he can't write or read, he wants his knowledge passed on, and he visits and lets me record his ramblings.

This article presents some of Essimuth's lore, which would be useful for those AD&D® game players in our world just starting out in the adventuring business. (A kindly Dungeon Master could pass a copy of this article to novice players and use the information in it for future adventures.) When necessary, Essimuth's comments are translated into AD&D game terms. The more that folks learn about surviving in dungeons, the better of the Forgotten Realms—and other worlds—will be.

The basics

Equipment

"When new adventurers fill their packs before a dungeon trip, they seem to have everythin' there but the bucket from the well. It's unnatural to want to carry all that weight for miles across rough terrain and then ferry it down into a dungeon. Those folks get so tired they don't have the strength to lift a sword before the first monster's on 'em!"

"Take with you only the stuff you need for yourself. If you've got a large party, you can afford a few odds and ends like extra ropes, a few casks of oil, and a tent. Me, I got along just fine for years with my simple pack, daggers, and a woolen blanket! It's nice to have everythin' you might ever need, but it's not so nice to have it all when you're tryin' to outrun a pack of wights breathin' down your necks."

Encumbrance rules cover the dangers of overloading a character (see the Player's Handbook, pages 76- 79). If players are prone to overloading their characters, these rules should fix the problem.

In a party, characters often duplicate equipment that they believe is needed while ignoring some basics that could mean the difference between life and death. Below are Essimuth's opinions and commentaries on a number of items used for under-

ground adventuring and dungeoneering.

Backpack, belt pouch (large), sack (small): "If you think you need to bring more than this to hold your equipment and any treasure you're likely to find, you're foolin' yourself, friend. Loadin' up to hold more stuff than what fits in these is askin' to be eaten by the slowest jel-block [slang for a gelatinous cube]. If you come across loads of treasure, take what you can carry of the most valuable stuff, stash the rest, and come back later when the foe's cleaned out with lots of sacks and people to carry 'em—what you took away the first time should be more than enough for wages. Too many good people I knew became victims of their own greed by loadin' themselves down with gold and gems—if they weren't killed in the dungeon, thieves and assassins got 'em out on the roads or in the towns later. 'If your eye for treasure is bigger than a piece of gold, you're apt to lose both.' That's my motto. That, and 'No amount of gold is worth more than your own skin.'"

Chalk: "I can't read or write, but scratchin' a symbol on a wall, like an arrow, helps keep your bearings in a twisted dungeon and gets you out alive. 'Course, this only works if the monsters don't have the smarts to wipe the marks away or, worse yet, change 'em."

Flint and steel: "If you gotta ask me why this is needed, you don't have enough common sense to cross a street, let alone go adventurin'. Take it and plan on usin' it when the wizard's flame spells fail and the torches need lightin'. Trust me; it happens."

Light sources: "Torches are much better for dungeons than lanterns—they're loads cheaper, and lots of times it's better to have an open flame than a shiny new lantern. If you're worried about torches blowin' out, block the wind with your body. You also don't have to worry about spillin' oil on yourself. One poor sap I traveled with panicked against some skeletons, took off runnin', and the lantern's oil spilled down his arm, burnin' as it went. Torches are lots simpler to deal with than blasted heavy lanterns. Just bring some sealed flasks of oil along for throwin'—helps the fires from a wizard's flame spells last a lot longer, you know."

"Candles are good for peekin' close at traps or other small things without singein' your eyebrows off with a torch. Spellcasters like 'em, too, for lookin' at carvings and paintings and the like."

Ladder: "Slipped on a rung and nearly broke my leg tryin' to scramble up one to escape a monster once. They're cumbersome and just too much trouble when

you're in a hurry. Tell your wizards to work on their arm strength and make 'em climb ropes."

Map/scroll case: "Why do you think only spellcasters should bring these? I've always taken one down into the depths. Nice and watertight, they're a great place to stash small items like gems, candles and stubs, lock-pickin' tools, and souvenirs for the kids, like lizards' teeth. Be sure to stuff some sheep's wool into the case; you don't want the rattlin' of lil' things bringin' trouble your way."

Perfume: "A good item if you can afford the space, and if the bottle's sealed real tight. Many monsters track you down by scent, so if you think you're bein' followed, go to an intersection of three or more corridors and spread the perfume around. It should confuse the critters enough to give you maybe up to five or six minutes of breathin' space."

Pitons: "Nice lil' things, pitons. You can pound 'em into doors to keep 'em from closin'. That's what the dungeon merchants told us. 'Course, they never tell you that the noise of poundin' 'em in brings lots of monsters. Wedge a rock in a doorway if you don't want it to shut. It works most of the time, with no critters comin' to see what the noise and the vibrations in the walls and floor are all about."

Signal whistle: "All a whistle means in a dungeon is 'Dinner time!' Monsters'll love it. Don't bother."

Essimuth's list of essentials (Ignoring armor, weapons, and weapon extras like quivers): Backpack, one winter blanket, one large belt pouch, 1-2 candles, flint and steel, grappling hook (no more than one per person and two per party), map/scroll case, two flasks of lamp oil (wizards should carry up to five, but always carry them in separate pockets or pouches, lest they break), one small sack, one 50' loop of rope (silk is best for poundage; no more than one loop per person and four per party), one set of thieves' tools (for rogues, at least one set per party), 2-3 torches (per person); two weeks' worth of dry rations ("For any other food, you should find it on the hoof"), one waterskin (with water). Total poundage for suggested items: 20 lbs. (assuming silk rope, one grappling hook, and two flasks of oil).

In backpack: blanket, map/scroll case, oil flasks, rolled-up sack, unlit torches, rations.

In belt pouch: candles, flint and steel, oil flasks, thieves' tools.

Hanging on pack or belt: grappling hook, rope, waterskin.

Off to meet adventure

"I've lost count of how many young adventurers I've watched head out into the Stonelands or some other dangerous area, vowin' to conquer the world. I can think of only fifteen—no, twenty—that

actually came back. Do your families and friends a favor, and get your affairs in order before leavin'. Leave word with someone you trust to handle any large holdings if word of your death arrives. And, for the sakes of those at home, return at least once a year so it's known you're alive. Like I said, I've seen hundreds leave, but only a fifth lived to return with tales of adventure.

"What exactly do you think new adventurers 'spect to find in old dungeons and crypts? Treasure galore guarded only by a few orcs with rusty daggers, that's what. There are so many dangers within dungeons, I can't even begin to go into all the details. Each dungeon has its own dangers, problems, and pitfalls, and you can never be ready for 'em all. What you can do, though, is be ready for the stuff that's in all of 'em."

Air: "Take a breath. Air tastes clear and clean, right? Well, the air in a dungeon's not nearly so clean. Many of 'em are built with small vents to the surface, but a lot of air gets trapped or used up by other things breathin' it. (Some wizard told me about how it worked, but I fell asleep and he never repeated the story.) I found the deeper you go, the tougher it gets to breathe. Most dungeons don't have these problems, but if they're deeper than two or three levels, expect some ventilation problems. Some spellcasters and magicks can relieve the problem, but fightin' while the air is thin is a tough feat, let me tell you. If you notice you're havin' trouble breathin', either figure out a way to get more clean air down where you are or else get out. If you're trapped in a bad air pocket, that'll kill you as easily as any critter."

"**Crypts!** Now there's a real problem with air. Those places were never meant to have that much air in 'em—who was gonna need it? If you're out to fight a lich or somethin', chances are the air is at least foul, if not deadly. Somethin' new folk never realize is how much dead creatures stink, 'specially if you open a tomb and the air's been contained with the rot.

"Say, I just remembered a lil' tip for you. If the air's a bit thin, you're fine for short periods of time. Check out the dungeon. If you can't find any dead remains and the dungeon looks fairly clean, you might think the place is patrolled, right? Well, chances are it's patrolled, all right, but by slimes, puddings, jellies, and all that sort of janitor monster stuff. Not all monsters need air, and the blob beasts don't need it at all.

"If the flames on your torches turn blue, trust me, just turn back! Sometimes you can find pockets of inflammable gases that make your torch flare. If you stay too long with your open flame, you might ignite the entire gas pocket. See this scar? Take it from me, explosions are somethin' fierce you don't want to go through."

If a dungeon has bad air circulation and

venting, there's a chance of foul air. Dungeon Masters should gauge the air by the need for it (if it's someone's lair, it will be well vented), the amount of decay within the dungeon (sites of large battles with lots of corpses almost always have foul atmospheres), and the special situations of a room (rooms magically sealed for centuries almost guarantee deadly air unless magically replenished).

There are three qualities of air: fresh, fouled, and deadly. DMs are encouraged to use these within dungeons for added touches. If PCs are fighting or making ability checks in fouled air, they have -2 penalties to such rolls. Deadly air has no available oxygen, and PCs must make saving throws vs. poison every turn or pass out (a second failed save results in death by asphyxiation). For more details on these air effects and conditions, see the AD&D SPELLJAMMER® boxed set's Concordance of Arcane Space, pages 11-12

It is not suggested that air quality become a major factor in every dungeon—it is brought up for touches of realism and an added effect to make the overlooked dangers of a setting come alive for the players. The best way to work in the dangers of foul air in dungeons is to use saving throws vs. poison if confronted with extremely fouled air (e.g., sealed tombs, any confined areas with rotting matter), with failures resulting in unconsciousness for 1-4 rounds.

Construction: "Every dungeon's different. They're all for keepin' stuff safe below ground, whether it's people, treasure, or magic, but they are easily told apart based on their builders. It's been a hobby of mine to notice the details of how the races of the Realms and other worlds, like that one called Oerth that I've told you stories of, build both above- and below-ground lairs.

"Human-built dungeons are the easiest to figure out. They rarely plan things for permanence, and when they do, they overdo it. Humans build their dungeons often without thinkin' about wells, light, air, and time. We've got the shortest lifespans of the good races, and we don't think of how well things might weather the ages. If you're in a dungeon with walls that have water runnin' through the stone, wooden doors everywhere that rely on key-locks, passages with ten-foot clearances, and lots of torch sconces in the walls, you're wanderin' through some human-built dungeon. Floors may be paved in places, but they're often packed dirt and get real uneven after a few decades. A real easy tip-off is a cell block with the shackles built into the walls; only humans bother with that sort of stuff to settle prisoners inside a cell.

"Dwarves are born master craftsmen of dungeons and any sort of large-scale stone buildin'. Smooth-fitted stone walls and floors are hallmarks of dwarven crafters. If you can pry a dagger 'tween

two fitted stone blocks, no dwarf had a hand in the makin' of that wall. Whereas other races' dungeon and underground corridors are sorta rectangular, with corridors higher than they are wide, dwarves build blocky, solid constructions that match a more square perspective, about seven to ten foot square. Doors are usually wood or stone, and they often vary in how they work. Some open from the left, some from the right, and some pivot on their centers. No other race has matched the dwarves' ability to manipulate stone; I once found a centuries-old door made of a huge slab of stone that pivoted smoothly with a light touch!

"Another easy-to-tell mark of dwarven buildin', least in this part of the Realms, are door locks. Dwarves here don't put locks in the doors but in the doorways 'emselves. Pickin' dwarven-made locks requires the ability to find exactly where the door locks, how it is locked, and how to undo its traps. Expect traps! Check the top of the door for the actual lock, as most dwarves here favor deadbolts from the top or bottom, and they put the trigger to undo the lock directly opposite the lock. Triggers are mostly recessed stone pressure plates, sometimes needin' a key like some dwarven god's holy symbol or somethin' to fit in a recess.

"Elves. You rarely find any underground stuff by them, but I gotta say there's a race of people that know how to build to last. They don't make their dungeons seem like they're livin' in a tomb. Artsy carvings, murals, song lyrics and poetry on the walls, and magic—magic's everywhere in elven constructions! Their craftsmanship is second only to the dwarves, though the beauty of their buildings makes up for any slips in stonework. They have a preference for wooden doors in their works, though these are often magically treated against rot, warps, and agin', so they maintain a good condition over time. Many of their traps tend toward magic and serve to stop entry rather than destroy the trespasser; guess they don't like to clean up after a fireball or somethin'. One good trick I learned from an otherwise borin'-as-all-get-out elven bard was to look for runes or songs written near a door in abandoned elven ruins; if the song is sung while facin' the door, the trap might be neutralized. That same bard didn't look closely once at the runes he studied; he sang one song in a different key than the magic needed, I guess, and was teleported away! If elves bother with mechanical traps, they hide those just as well, disguisin' some as art or decorative sconces. Many a button hidden in the eye of an elven statue opened a door, but a few nearly cost me a finger as well. Tough lil' traps, these elves make!"

If Dungeon Masters choose to make fine differentiations between door constructions, they can adopt optional modifica-

tions to open doors, pick locks, and find traps rolls. Dwarven doors are at -10% penalties (except for dwarves), and elven constructed doors are at -20% for find traps rolls only (including elves). Using such spells as warp wood against elven doors have a 20% chance of failure unless the caster is 5th level or greater.

Traffic clues: "I promised you a word about patrolled dungeons. If dungeons or caverns are occupied and patrolled regularly, there won't be dust and cobwebs where the main foot traffic is. Light sources are in or on the walls, and there's not much debris on the floors. Evidence of beaten or eaten adventurers usually's not around, unless it suits the taste of the dungeon's owner. If you need to hide in a patrolled dungeon, look for where there's more dust and the ground looks untravelled; chances are your pursuers won't be thinkin' about the tidiness of their dungeon and won't notice fresh footprints. Remember, too, what I once said about dungeons that look *too* clean, like somethin' licked the walls off. Well, somethin' probably did."

Lighting: "Most of the time, dungeons and cave lairs are dark, forebodin' places filled with creatures that prefer it that way. One of the dangers of bein' a surface dweller in their realm is the fact that the monsters will almost always see you before you see them. Still, one good reason for havin' torches is that they project light in all directions. There were a few times when our lives were saved by the extent of our torchlight. I've worked with elves and halflings, and they all grumble about us humans not bein' able to see in the dark. Frankly, if I'm goin', I want to see what's takin' me down. I don't care about heat images or infra-what shapes.

"Dungeon lightin' is often a patchwork thing. Occupied dungeons may have lights in the corridors if there're humans or other creatures without night vision. Folks with lots of magic, like elves or wizards, use spells to keep lights goin' forever. No matter who or what they are, if they're livin' in an underground place, their major temples and livin' spaces tend to be lit in one way or another. If you find a patrolled dungeon with a load of magic lights, get ready to meet a *really* tough spellcaster."

Races known for extensive magic-use (like elves or humans, particularly wizards' lairs) sometimes light dungeons bright as day with permanent continual light spells. Most likely, corridors will be lit temporarily by torches or other light sources carried with the traveler. Regardless of the race or its normal use of light, major encounter areas are often lit naturally or magically. Dwarves, halflings, and humans often maintain light with braziers of coals and fires. Elves magically light their temples and halls with spells.

Traps and hidden dangers

"Don't waste your time worryin' about magic traps. Most of the time, you'll get hit with those and you just gotta roll with it, 'less you got a sharp wizard with you to let you know about the weird stuff. Not much else to do 'cept take it on the chin and try and come out smilin'. Now, as for the stuff you can worry about and take the time to look at, you can be watchin' for basic dangers in caverns and dungeons—them bein' all the natural or built-in obstacles and traps.

Natural dangers: "Most obstacles in a dungeon or cave are pretty obviously dealt with. Crevasses and canyons you gotta either leap across—easy for furfoots and elves, not so easy for me—or maneuver with ropes or magic. If you're dealin' with a pit or whatever less than forty feet down, it's easiest to lower yourselves, cross the bottom, and climb up the other side. 'Course, this works best if a rogue can climb the other side of the pit—and I climbed some slick ones in my day, I did—or your spellcasters can float over the other side. Just don't let a wizard secure a rope without help; my backside aches when I think of how many 'secured' ropes slipped because some highly educated know-it-all didn't know how to tie a knot.

"Sta-lac-tites and sta-lag-mites—those're the technical terms for 'em. Me, I call 'em drippers and points. Don't ever try to kid yourself into tyin' a rope onto a dripper to lower yourself into a cavern—you'll get there faster than you think. Most people think they're nice and dry; some are, but lots of 'em are still formin' slow-like, and they're just moist enough to prevent a good hold. Points're good if they're rough enough to catch onto your ropes at parts; otherwise, you'll put some weight on the rope, it slides up the point and either breaks the rock off or it slips off.

"If you're in natural caverns, watch out for loose rocks and pebbles. They'll give you lots of clues if you're trackin'. Pebbles on bare rock scratch away from the direction of traffic, bein' pushed back by any feet. But they'll also give away your position if you knock a few pebbles off the ledge in a dragon's cave you're hopin' to loot. And, if you're movin' down a slight incline, a misstep on loose gravel or even one small stone is enough to send you slidin' down toward a monster's cookin' pot!

"Don't be a fool the first time you find a huge cavern with a high ceilin', temptin' you to yell to test the echo. First off, this alerts anythin' within earshot of you bein' there. 'Course, they probably heard your armor clankin' from a half-mile off anyway. Second, them drippers're not always stable; once in a rare while, some loud sounds, whether it's somebody yellin' or the sound of a fireball explodin', are

enough to send 'em crashin' down on your head! Third, even if nobody heard you yellin', it disturbs the bats and any other cave-dwellers, and they start addin' to the noise. Pretty soon, you can't hear yourself think—or hear anythin' comin'—because of these bats screechin' since you disturbed their beauty sleep. Sound don't disappear like it does when you're yellin' down the street; it travels a fair piece when it's bouncin' off the walls and down the dungeon corridors. You don't notice just how much noise you make until you're tryin' to hide from somethin' and you're wishin' for some grease in your armor joints.

"There's lots more dangers under the ground, but like I said, most of 'em are dealt with if you use your head. Keep your eyes and ears open, and you'll do fine. One last thing—keep an eye for the regular colors of both stone and soil in the area you're explorin'. If the floor suddenly shifts from bein' sandstone to granite or somethin' like that, something's up. My first guess is one of 'em trappers or mimics or some such. It pays to be lookin' at your feet now and then."

Traps: "Aside from monsters, traps're what cost me more friends than you have teeth. I learned about traps the hard way, so let me give you some pointers that'll keep you from the same hardships.

"I can see you preparin' for an adventure with a sly friend, sayin' 'So-and-so here can pick any lock and find any traps we'll run across.' Would you know where to look every time? Only humans are stupid enough to put traps where they're always expected. There's no way of knowin' how many variations of any traps there are, but there are a number of standards. Count us all lucky that traps tend to be the last things put into many dungeons, and most builders are tired by then, so traps tend to be repeated just to save the time in creatin' new ones.

"Different races tend toward certain ways of doin' traps. Humans overload their doors with traps put in the most obvious place—the lock. They also tend to go overboard with pit traps and trip wires. Ingenious as some of 'em are, they rely too much on the idea that people aren't watchin' where they're goin'. Elves come up with some of the most sophisticated traps; they're the only ones who excel at sound-based traps, like when you open a door and the noise of the squeaky hinge releases a pre-set volley of arrows. They like magic traps, too, like steppin' into a light beam that triggers a battery of thrustin' spears.

"I doff my hat to the dwarves, though, for sheer variety and skill in creatin' some of the toughest traps in creation. As tight and heavy as all their stonework seems, they can set up a stone floor on rollers that rolls out beneath you if you run,

dumpin' you onto the floor below! Dwarven traps tend toward heavy mechanicals and lots of deadfall traps. Everyone's seen the crushin' walls trap in a dungeon, but I once saw a corridor close on all sides while rotatin', like a rag bein' wrung out, crushin' all inside!"

Dungeon Masters can establish optional rules for trap detection, if they so choose. Most thieves do not specifically state where they are checking for traps. Establish where the characters are in relation to a trap; if they are not facing or specifically looking in the direction of the trap, they must roll their Find Traps skill with -10% penalty. This is simply handled by asking where the thief looks for traps; general answers of "everywhere" and the like should incur added time for searching (1d12 rounds).

For example: Kroger has a Find Traps of 45%. He's searching for traps but is focusing on the door; the trap is in the stones in front of the door (directly under his feet). He will find any traps on the door (lock traps, etc.) at 45%; he must roll 35% or less to detect the trap in the floorstones.

Magic below

"Okay, you know that magic's not my thing, but I've traveled a lot and met my share of wizards more than happy to talk of such matters. Let's just say I've picked up an idea or two on how to survive in a dungeon with some spell use. Even saved an apprentice mage or two in my time with some hints of what spells to help the party. Now, lemme see what I can remember from Garathorn's talks on spell use in a dungeon...."

The following are Essimith's comments on how and why to use many common spells in different ways to save your own hides (those with obvious uses, like knock and wizard lock, are self-explanatory).

Wizard spells

Affect normal fires (W1): "Great distraction in a fight if you cause the torches or braziers to suddenly erupt in flames! This works good for partially blindin' creatures with night vision if an area is dimly lit by fire." **(Wisdom check required, or infravision-using creatures are blinded for 1-3 rounds)**

Alarm (W1): "If you don't want to be followed, have a wizard set one of these behind your party. The way sound carries in a dungeon, you'll easily hear the noise if anythin' large is followin' you. As a lil' bonus, the noise may set the wanderin' monsters to fightin' each other rather than your party."

Burning hands (W1): "Easiest way to neutralize some poison needle traps in a chest or door is to let the wizard shoot some flames into the lock and dry up the poisons—but possibly fuse the mechanisms." **(Eliminates any liquid poisons, but**

not powders; 25% chance of fusing the trap mechanism in a normal door lock.)

Enlarge (W1): "Even the most amateur wizard can use this spell with good results in door-bustin'. Just cast it on the door and enlarge it until the door breaks. This tactic works best on wooden doors, whereas reversin' it to shrink doors works better than tryin' to shatter a stone door. Shrinkin' actually helps to see where the locks and traps are, though some may go off due to the changin' of the door." **(Either effect has a 20% chance per level of shattering or disabling a door through growth or shrinking; the shattering of wooden doors with this spell can inflict 1d10 hp damage from splinters to those within 10').**

Grease (W1): "Perfect for handlin' stuck doors without the drawbacks of usin' this spell—just cast it on the door. It's also great for preventin' pursuit." **(Greasing a door increases the chances to open it by 15% and automatically frees stuck doors.)**

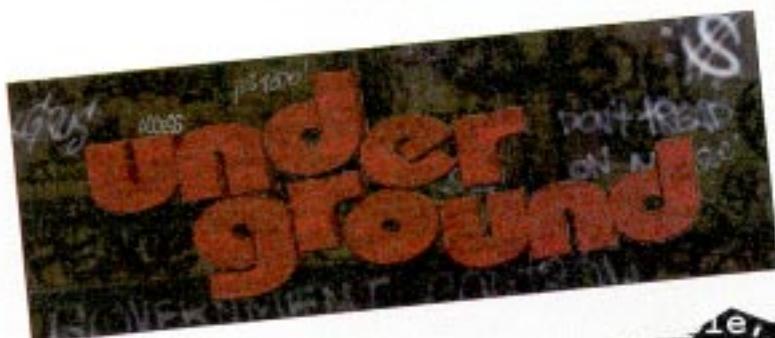
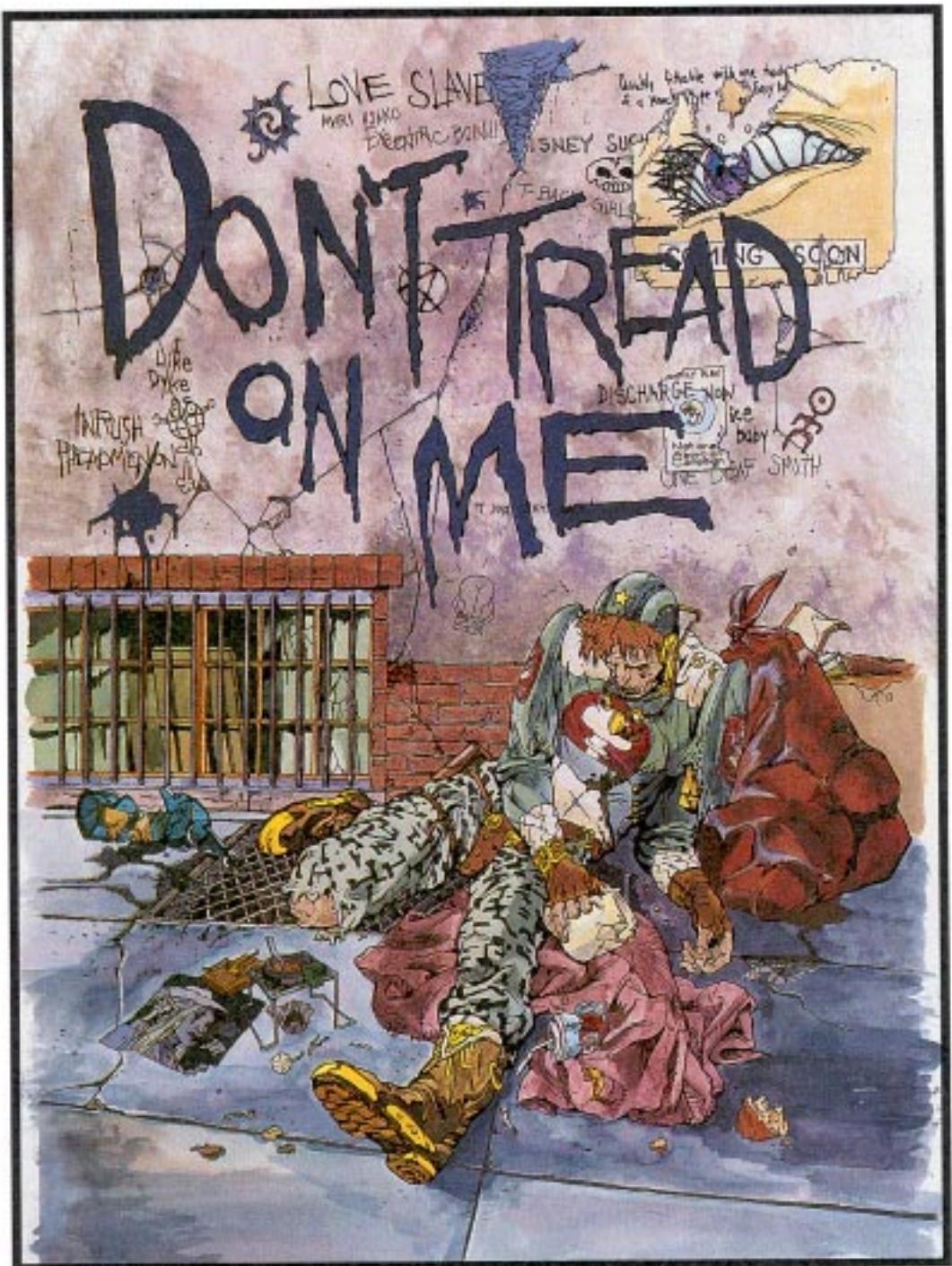
Light (W1): "Sometimes, castin' this spell into a lock or into the seams of a chest can reveal the outlines of hidden traps or other surprises." **(Adds 5% to detect traps.)**

Flaming sphere (W2): "Talk about your own personal flamin' batterin' ram! These lil' suckers can burn down a wooden door if you just hold 'em in place for a few minutes, and no one even has to be close, so disarmin' traps is often a moot point."

(Two rounds of contact with a flaming sphere will burn down a normal wooden door; if treated against fire, the door gains a save for each round.)

Fog cloud (W2): "Okay, this one takes some teamwork. Now, if you know there're intelligent monsters in a room and they're waitin' behind a door, this spell will help loads. First, get your fighters flankin' the doorway, weapons ready. Spellcasters are a bit back, ready to let fly with magic missiles and whatnot. Get your wizard to cast this spell so it looks like poison gas, and cast it through knotholes or keyholes in the door, immediately backin' up after the spell takes effect. When the monsters come runnin' out from the 'poison,' you've got the drop on 'em!"

Irritation (W2): "This spell's great for distractin' critters but also for confoundin' some tricky dungeon dwellers. If the itchin' version of the spell is cast on mimics, lurkers, cloakers, and the like, they drop their special shapes and camouflage and twitch while the spell lasts. When you run into mimics shaped like doors that block your way, it's nice to have a quick way to get past 'em." **(Magical creatures that sense through their epidermal surfaces are especially susceptible to this spell's effects, even if their skins can take on the appearances and base solidity of wood or stone. Creatures such as mimics and lurkers have a -1 penalty on saves; if allowed, casting this spell has a 50% chance of releasing you from inside the**



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grip of trappers and lurkers.)

Melf's acid arrow (W2): "Nice simple way to melt your way through locks, chains, or almost anythin' other than stone." (Materials must make saves vs. acid or be dissolved.)

Fireball (W3): "Talk about spells of thunder and fury! This spell's primary focus is destruction, but it can be used to other benefits as well. If you're lookin' at wide-scale traps such as a row of murder holes or a room filled with pressure plates and poison darts, toss in one o' these and make sure you're not near the flames. The fire and force of the explosion can often disable such traps by meltin' the mechanisms, burnin' up darts, or at least dryin' up any poisons. Always be sure you've got enough room to handle the thing's expansion—you want to know how many cloaks and boots and beards I've lost because a wizard misjudged his range? (Make one save vs. fire for the general trap mechanisms, with penalties for a high-level caster's fireball, like -1 for levels 5-7, -2 for levels 8-10, and -3 for casters beyond 11th level. Failed saves signal a breakdown in the trap, rendering it harmless. Live targets, like kobolds behind rows of murder holes, are protected enough to subtract half damage from the spell before making their saving throws.)

Priest spells

Heat metal/Chill metal (P2): "This spell's a dandy for muckin' with chests and doors. Heatin' the metal for a good amount of time destroys lots of trap types, as well as renderin' the wood underneath and around the metal dried and charred, more brittle and easier to bust. Coolin' the metal can shrink the metal hinges or the lock to allow for easier trap detection as well as lock pickin'."

Produce flame (P2): (See "Burning hands" above.)

"In case you ever get over to the Realms and start plannin' some of these antics, there's maybe one more thing you ought to know. It's not likely to surprise you, but some spells make noise when they go off. If you're tryin' to sneak around, don't set fireballs and lightnin' bolts after your foes—everythin' within the next hundred yards can hear that something's up. Sounds may get muffled, but they still carry down long dungeon corridors, echoin' all the way. For that matter, lots of lightnin' bolts carry that extra punch because of the thunderclap. Used to take me nearly an hour to get the ringin' out of my ears. And priests! They're the noisiest, callin' out to the gods loud as they can for some flashy spells or for the turnin' of the undead. If I was a cleric, I'd want to worship a Power with better hearin'."

Monsters

"Last, but not least, you got monsters. Not much I can tell you specifically to help against 'em, 'less I tell you all I know about certain critters. That's a long bunch of stories for another time.

"Well, now that I think on it, you could learn a few basics about wanderers, the monsters roamin' through any old ruins or dungeons or caverns. They're wanderin' for only one reason—they're hungry and they haven't seen what they're hungry for yet. 'Course, whether they're hungry for food or gold is of no concern. If you run across organized units of creatures, with leaders and regular armor and all, either you've got a platoon of lost orcs or the lair you're in is inhabited and patrolled. That's bad. Army folk with any trainin' and experience are not likely to be friendly.

"Keep a lil' extra food or gold on hand at all times; bribes can defuse tight situations with wanderers. I've never found an orc or goblin what was above a liberal bribe, 'less it had a reason to hate you. An orc or goblin's bribe's usually pretty cheap, since few of 'em can count good. Don't turn your back on 'em, whatever.

"Don't bother tryin' to give iron rations to animals—they like their food raw, not dried and salted. And if you didn't know this already, most animals and dumb monsters think on pretty low levels and startle easily. Simply wavin' a torch in their faces can sometimes give you the seconds you need to save your life, if someone holds back to slow 'em down. Most monsters don't care for flames; only the brave ones approach campsites if a fire's goin'. 'Course, a fire might attract the attention of a smart critter, and then you got problems.

"Just 'cause a beast is small and can't bite you, don't think for a moment that it can't be dangerous. If you scare a swarm of lil' bats, their flappin' and chitterin' sometimes attracts bigger critters' attention. One time, years ago, some comrades an' me sneaked into a dungeon and helped ourselves to a lot of treasure without attractin' the notice of anybody 'cept a kobold with a horn, who brought a whole army of kobolds and jinxkins down on us. We were lucky to get out with our lives. If a monster's got a shield, it can bang it with a weapon or smash it against a wall as an alarm.

"Now, I've told you all I've gotta tell for now about monsters. You're askin' the wrong guy about 'em. You should ask my cousin, Hargyn. He's fought just about everythin' what's walked on two, four, or six legs. He'll tell you everythin' you need to know. Me, I gotta get back home and see to the tavern. Hail and well met!"



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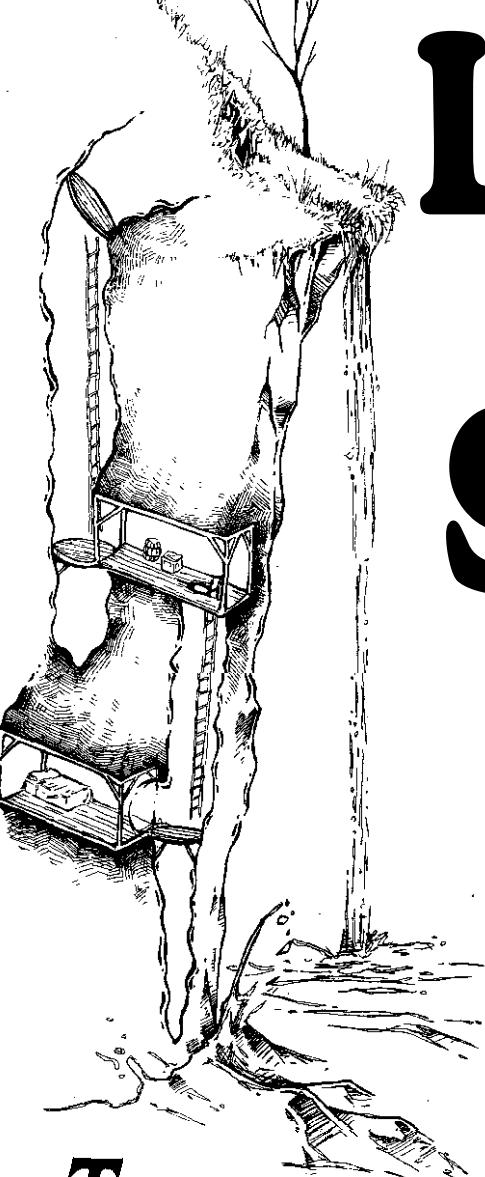
in role-playing takes place?

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Live Statues and Stone Men

Golems of the Underdark

by John Power

Artwork by Terry Dykstra

The Underdark is a vast and mysterious place. Even after hundreds of years and adventurers, the whole extent of this twisted, dark world is unknown. Every time an adventurer crawls out of the ground, a new mystery is revealed.

One such mystery is the appearance of new golems. These huge automatons, created through the binding of magical forces to an inanimate figure, were always suspected to exist in new forms in the Underdark, but no trustworthy evidence was ever collected.

I am now glad to say that is all behind us. In the following pages, I will describe three automatons that I have seen with my own eyes. Although I am sure they were created through magic or the allowance of some god (notably Lolth in the case of the Spider-stone golem), I have yet to perceive the process myself or, indeed, acquire a specimen. However, the fact that they exist is enough to show that we can no longer exclude our Underdark cousins from our magical scrutiny.

Emerald Hapworth, Waterdeep
True Tales of Underearth



Following are the descriptions of three golems created by the races of the Underdark, those races being the illithid, the drow, and the dwarves. There are no notes detailing the processes that allows the manufacture of these monsters, because the information is closely guarded by those who have it—so closely guarded, in fact, that most members of the race in question don't even know these golems exist. Perhaps somewhere in those dark caverns lie *manuals of golems* that fully detail the methods of creating these underdark golems.

Golem, Brain

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Subterranean

FREQUENCY: Very rare

ORGANIZATION: Solitary

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any

DIET: Nil

INTELLIGENCE: Low (5-7)

TREASURE: Nil

ALIGNMENT: Lawful evil

NO. APPEARING: 1

ARMOR CLASS: 3

MOVEMENT: 6

HIT DICE: 60 hp (12 HD)

THAC0: 9

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 fist

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2d12

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Mental blast*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Immune to mind-influencing spells, +2 weapon needed to hit it

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 70%

SIZE: 8' tall, 5' wide

MORALE: Special

XP VALUE: 10,000

A creation of the ancient race of mind flayers, brain golems are the most horrible of all golems. They exist purely for the desires of illithids and are unswayed from their goals, once set.

A brain golem appears as huge, burly humanoid with an oversized brain for a head. In fact, the whole body is made up of brain tissue but is covered with a thin film of slimy skin.

Although brain golems are more intelligent than other golems, they are completely unable to communicate.

Combat: Brain golems are used as muscle or guards for illithids and attack an opponent only if so ordered or if the opponent tries to get at what the brain golem is guarding. Regardless of the situation, brain golems never attack mind flayers, which limits their effectiveness in battles between members of that race.

In combat, brain golems are more aware of their environment than other golems. They always aim for wizards first, knowing that a quick strike could easily kill that physically weak class. They seem to have an innate ability to roughly determine an opponent's con-

dition (i.e., hit points), and they nearly always aim for the next weakest character after a wizard.

A brain golem's physical attack is a swift punch with its fist. It is unable to employ both fists in a round because of its singular thought pattern, but the one fist is often good enough.

In addition, once every turn, a brain golem can release a form of the mind flayer's *mental blast*. This energy strikes everyone within 60 yards. All those hit must make saving throws vs. spells or suffer 2d8 hp damage and become stunned for 1d10 rounds. Those who save only lose initiative for the next round and suffer 1d8 hp damage. The golem usually uses this attack if it is brought down to 15 hp or less, or ordered to do so by a mind flayer.

Brain golems are immune to poisons, gases, death magic, and mind-influencing spells such as charms or illusions (treat them as if they had Intelligence and Wisdom scores of 24 for purposes of spell immunity only). They also possess a magic resistance of 70%. However, the considerable magic immunity of most golems is not present in this golem, for unknown reasons; the lack may have something to do with the process that creates it.

Habitat/Society:

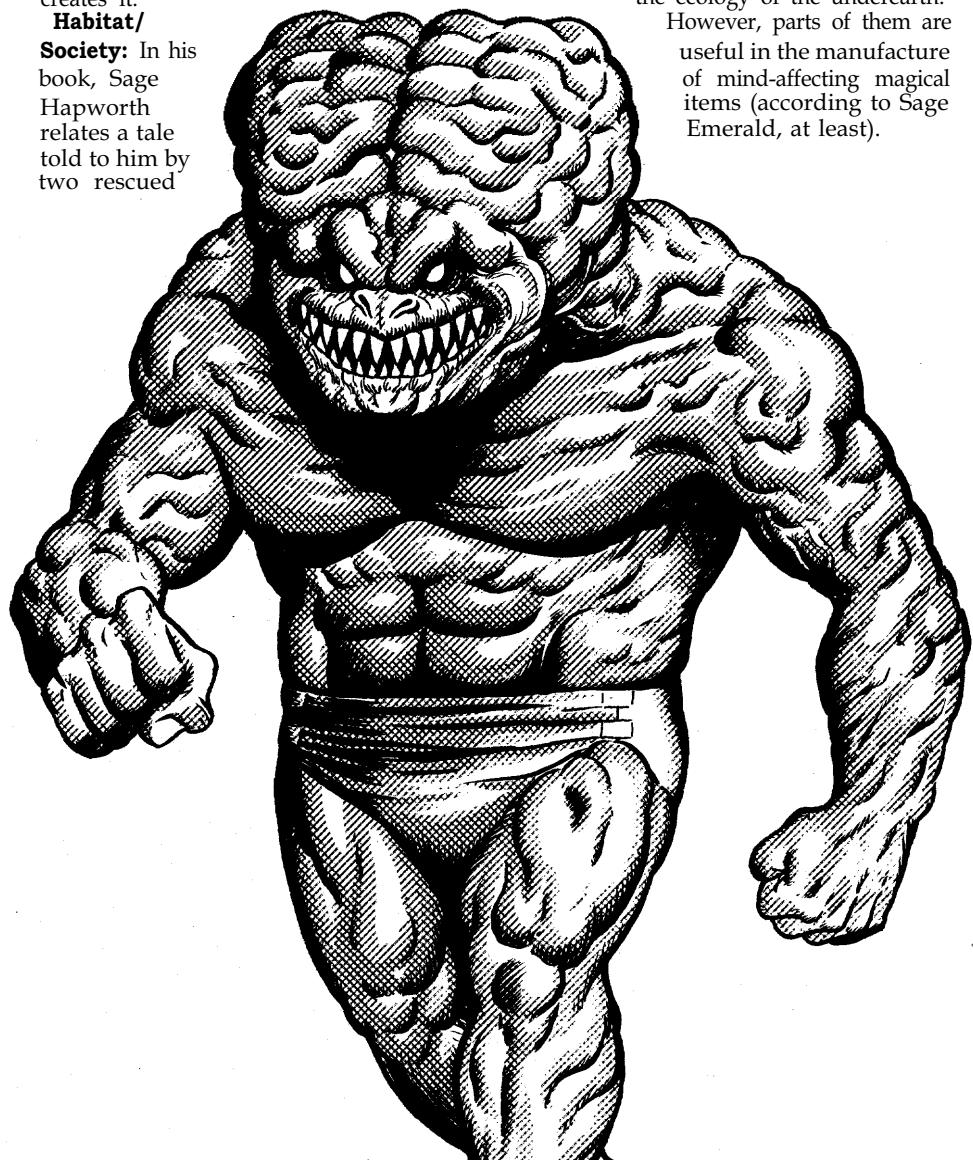
In his book, Sage Hapworth relates a tale told to him by two rescued

human prisoners of the illithids. They apparently saw a brain golem being created. Although the magic used was unknown by the humans, the brain golem's body seemed to be a combination of different racial brains. As for the head, this was taken from a part of the elder brain of the mind flayers. The skin was a membrane oozed from the same elder brain.

Mind flayers use brain golems like they use all slaves. Brain golems are heavy guards, used against monsters resistant to mind attacks or the physical attacks of the illithids. In addition, they are used to perform tasks that are beneath mind flayers, such as guarding food stocks and slaves, etc. Because of their undying loyalty and obedience, the mind flayers prefer brain golems over other races or constructs. A cynical phrase used by the githzerai, "treated like a brain golem," means to be treated well by a slavemaster.

Every city or community of mind flayers has only 2-5 such golems. The reason for this limit is probably because the illithids don't want to take too much from the elder brain.

Ecology: Except in the services of their masters, brain golems have no place in the ecology of the underearth. However, parts of them are useful in the manufacture of mind-affecting magical items (according to Sage Emerald, at least).



Golem, Hammer

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Subterranean (dwarven kingdoms)
FREQUENCY: Very rare
ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any
ORGANIZATION: Solitary
DIET: Nil
INTELLIGENCE: None (0)
TREASURE: Nil
ALIGNMENT: Neutral
NO. APPEARING: 1
ARMOR CLASS: 0
MOVEMENT: 6, Br 6
HIT DICE: 60 hp (14 HD)
THAC0: 7
NO. OF ATTACKS: 2
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2d10/2d12
SPECIAL ATTACK: *Pounding force*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: +1 weapon needed to hit it, immune to spells
MAGIC RESISTANCE: See text
SIZE: L (9' tall)
MORALE: Fearless (19-20)
XP VALUE: 13,000

The nightmare of orcs and other dwarven enemies, this rare golem is constructed by dwarves themselves (though there have been instances in history of powerful High Ones creating clay golems). The process is as rare and secretly kept as the manufacture of the most powerful dwarven magical weapons. The hammer golem is definitely created by dwarven priests (or High Ones in the Forgotten Realms—see FR11 *Dwarves Deep*).

A hammer golem stands about 9' tall and weighs about 2,000 lbs. It resembles a gigantic stone dwarf (beard included) covered in adamantite plate mail. Its forearms have been replaced by two weapons—a hammer on the right arm and a pickaxe or axe on its left.

A hammer golem moves heavily and slowly. When encountering orcs and their kin, it gives out a hollow roar as it attacks.



Combat: This golem attacks only if ordered by its master, if it encounters orcs, or if it is kept from its assigned task. The latter condition allows it to attack if someone tries to get at what the golem is guarding when it is carrying out this task. It can remember as many commands as the creator wishes, but at most the commands must total up to only twice the creator's Wisdom in words.

When without a master, a hammer golem attacks anything in front of it until the opponents leave it or its charge alone or are dead. If the opponents are goblinkinoids, only their death or the golem's destruction will break off its attack.

This golem attacks with its pick, for 2d12 hp damage, and hammer, for 2d10 hp damage. In addition, it can employ a *pounding force* every turn. This is similar to a *repulsion* spell, except that, in addition to the usual effects, it inflicts 4d6 hp damage if the save fails, or 2d6 hp otherwise.

A hammer golem is immune to every spell except for *wish* (which affects the golem as the caster wants) and *stone to flesh* (which acts as a *heal* spell on the golem). In addition, a weapon of +1 or more magical power is needed to hit this golem.

Habitat/Society:

Hammer golems are made by dwarven priests (or High Ones in the FORGOTTEN REALMSTM setting) for use as guards, warriors, or massive miners (they can tunnel through rock at MV 6). A hammer golem for war possesses an axe on the left arm, and one for mining has pickaxes on both.

Ecology: Hammer golems contribute nothing to deepearth ecology, except for the destruction of goblinkinoids and the mining of minerals.

Golem, Spiderstone

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Subterranean (drow kingdoms)

FREQUENCY: Very rare

ORGANIZATION: Solitary

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any

DIET: Nil

INTELLIGENCE: None (0); see text

TREASURE: Nil

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic evil

NO. APPEARING: 1(10% chance of 2)

ARMOR CLASS: 3

MOVEMENT: 9

HIT DICE: 55 hp (11 HD)

THAC0: 11

NO. OF ATTACKS: 4

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d12/1d12/1d12/1d12

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Web spit*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Immune to all spells

except drow priest magic and invocations, +1 weapon needed to hit it,

spider climb

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 50%

SIZE: L (7' tall)

MORALE: Special

XP VALUE: 11,000

Spiderstone golems, also known as obsidian golems, are the constructed servants of drow spellcasters. Each is inhabited by the spirit of an unknown tanar'ri servant of Lolth, ensuring that its use is not directed against Lolth or her servants. Because a spiderstone golem has a spirit that is not completely bound to its material form, it is considered to be a lesser golem.

Physically, this golem resembles a large statue of a four-armed drow carved out of gloss-black obsidian. When inactive, no signs of animation are apparent; when it activates, the golem's eyes glow a fiery red. It weighs about 1,000 lbs.

Combat: When under mortal control, a spiderstone golem has as much intelligence as other golems (though the presence of the tanar'ri "overseer" gives it an evil alignment). However, it is able to



follow one different command per round, as long as the command does not go over four words for a wizard or six for a priest. This command may be changed from round to round.

When a spiderstone golem goes wild, it becomes more cunning and intelligent, increasing its Intelligence to the Semi- (2-4) category. It always seeks to kill its master first, then follows the commands of Lolth. In this mode, the golem is capable of designing simple traps, maximizing its abilities fully.

In combat, spiderstone golems attack with four fists or a *web spit*. This spit has a range of 90 yards and requires a hit roll. If it hits, all within 20' are affected with a *web* spell; the being hit gets no saving throw. Otherwise, the "spit" splatters harmlessly and dissipates in 1d4 rounds.

Spiderstone golems are able to use *spider climb* at will. They are immune to all spells, except those of drow priests and invocation/evocation spells (though they still roll for magic resistance and gain a saving throw, if allowable). To hit a spiderstone golem requires a magical weapon of +1 or better.

Habitat/Society: There is a small chance every week of a spiderstone golem going wild. If under a priest and in the service of the city of Lolth, the chance is only 1%. Otherwise, it varies from 5% to 100%, depending on what it's being used for —e.g., 5% if it's under a wizard in the service of Lolth, 50% if it's being used for guarding something of personal value to the master and of no use to Lolth, or 100% if it is being used directly against Lolth.

Because these golems tend to be loyal to Lolth first and their masters second, they are rarely created by priests and even less likely to be created by wizards.

However, when they are manufactured, they are often used for such tasks as guarding a temple or hunting down enemies of the priesthood. In the case of wizards, of course, they are useful, but the wizard is taking his chances.

Ecology: Except in the service of drow elves, spiderstone golems are similar to other golems in that they neither give or take anything from the ecology of the underdark.

However (again, according to Emerald), the powdered remains of this golem are useful in the creation of magical scrolls and items related to spiders, webs, and the abilities of spiders (e.g.; a scroll of *spider climb*, *cloak of arachnida*, *arrow of slaying arachnids*, etc.). The eyes are apparently rubies and may fetch up to 10,000 gp each on the market.

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- Women with *Adjective Noun 1* falling out of chainmail *Noun 2*,
- Lustful, *Adjective Pronoun Verb* innocent *Pronoun*,
- *Adjective* scenes of *Adjective Pronoun* and *Adjective Pronoun* engaged in *Adjective* acts of *Verb*,
- Steamy illustrations of *Adjective Pronoun* wearing nothing but their *Noun 2*.

Directions: For censored nouns and verbs, roll 1d12 on Table 1: Random Naughty Bits.



The Cosmic Paternity Suit

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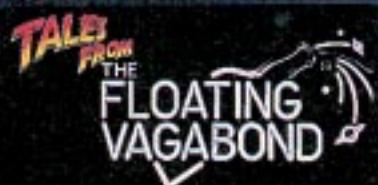
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TABLE 1: RANDOM NAUGHTY BITS

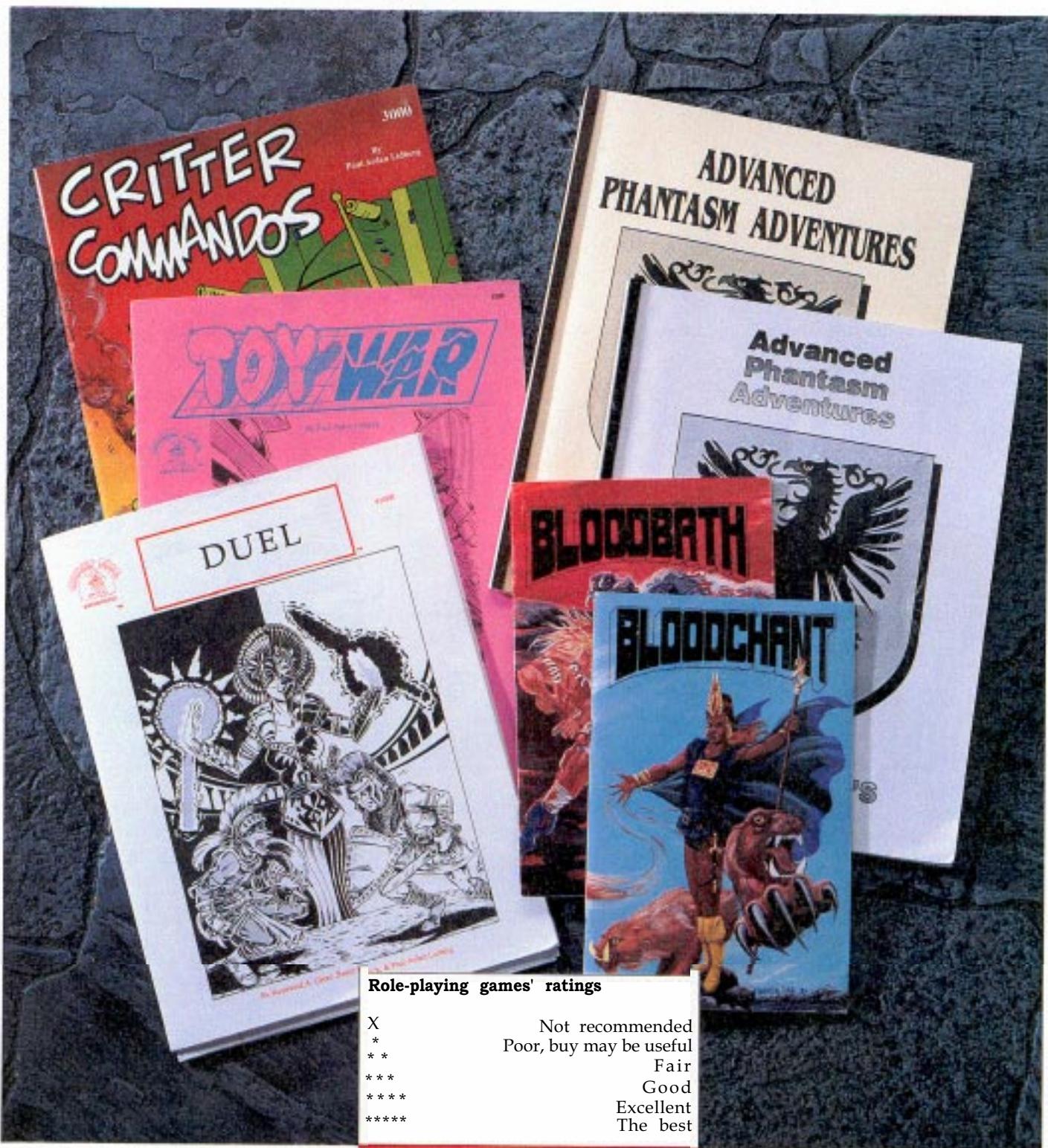
1d12 Adjectives	Passionate Pronouns	Naughty Nouns 1	Naughty Nouns 2	Vulgar Verbs
1 Claustrophobic	Hamsters	Nostrils	Spandex Tights	Spelunking
2 Siamese	Canadians	Rubber Chickens	Platform Shoes	Masticating
3 Nervous	Moose	Navels	Flimsy Negligees	Headbutting
4 Mail-Order	Anabaptists	Sloping Foreheads	Leisure Suits	Blubbering
5 Bug-Eyed	Monsters	Ears	X-Ray Specs	Waddling
6 Disgruntled	Elf Babes	Driver's Side Airbags	Combat Boots	Dwarf-Tossing
7 Big Honkin'	Lumber Jacks	Spam	Bermuda Shorts	Log-Rolling
8 Uninhibited	Livestock	Pork Rinds	Bowler Hats	Tickling
9 Drunken	Santas	Love Handles	Toupees	Target Vomiting
10 Inflatable	Aardvarks	Hairy Knuckles	Nehru Jackets	Groveling
11 Hairy	Dwarves	Pigtails	Chainmail Bikinis	Belly-Flopping
12 Sexually Frustrated	Gamers	100-Sided Dice	High-Water Pants	Roleplaying



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Role-playing Reviews



Role-playing games' ratings

X
*
**

Not recommended
Poor, buy may be useful
Fair
Good
Excellent
The best

Heroes of Troy vs. the Lidberg babies

By Lester Smith

Not long ago, my wife and I, together with some friends, took our children to see Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*. The story is one we have seen in numerous forms, and we have often discussed the mythology involved and debated its implications. But at the end of this particular film, I sat in somewhat stunned satisfaction at the beauty of Disney's version. I remember thinking of it as evidence that—regardless of the modern cliche that the bigger the business, the more heartless—making a buck need not get in the way of making something of human value. Doing business need not preclude producing art.

For me, that's an important realization. Having been raised with a blue-collar, "sweat-of-the-brow" view toward employment, I began adult life as a factory worker. When I later left the factory and began pursuing gaming as a career, I had something of a struggle adapting to the concept of receiving a paycheck for being creative. Also, I suppose I've had the term "starving artist" hammered into my head enough times over the years that I was afraid that making a living and doing something creative were mutually exclusive.

I'm happy to say that it isn't so. Having been on staff at two different game companies now, as well as having done a stint as a free-lancer, I have gotten to know a number of people in the industry. Also, I've been paying some attention to small-press businesses as they spring up, and have watched some of them grow into larger concerns. The result of all this is that I've come to see that it isn't such a strange or whimsical thing to make a living being creative, nor does success prevent inventiveness. Pretty much everyone I've met in gaming, from large company and small, is intensely creative. Most take the business of fun seriously, readily debating the relative merits of various approaches to game mechanics, background, and presentation.

So if that's the case, why do I focus my review columns on small-press games? There are several reasons, but the major one is that although neither large nor small companies corner the market on inventiveness, while large-press companies tend to have an edge in terms of experience and resources, small-press producers can afford to be quirky—for lack of a better term.

It has to do with the differing realities that small and large companies face. If the

members of a small-press firm produce a game that doesn't sell, or that offends some people, they still have their day jobs, and they can try another product later, perhaps even assuming a different company name to avoid identification with the old one. As a consequence, they are free to try nearly any treatment of nearly any topic. In fact, given that larger firms have the edge on them in terms of experience, polish, and distribution, small-press companies are virtually driven to quirkiness in order to gain attention. Large gaming firms, on the other hand, cannot much afford to produce a poor-selling or offensive game. If it happens very often, people on staff lose their day jobs, and the company's reputation can be permanently damaged. This is one of the facts large companies have to take into account when deciding what items to produce.

Another powerful force in those decisions is consumer demand. Assume for a moment that a small-press company has produced something that really catches on. Soon, they'll find themselves devoting ever more attention to supporting their new hit, simply to meet consumer demand. As a result, they'll find themselves on the road to becoming an increasingly larger organization, leaving quirkiness to other, new small-press companies.

It's an unending cycle. And as a gamer, collector, and reviewer, I'm glad that it means there will always be something new to pique my interest, and to share with you.

In this particular installment, I've chosen to discuss a few works by two separate designer/publishers: Troy Christensen and Paul Lidberg.

BLOODBATH* game

24-page, 5½" x 8½" rulebook, 8½" x 11" world map, 8½" x 11" hex map, counter sheet

T.C. International \$3.95

Design: Troy Christensen and Rick Slawson

Development: Troy Christensen

Cover: Jeff and Amanda Dee

Interior art: Not credited.

Let me say up front that I do not recommend this game for the squeamish. The BLOODBATH game is unabashedly devoted to hack-and-slash role-playing. If the game's title doesn't make that completely obvious, the cover painting cer-

tainly does. The front cover shows a bloody barbarian with an incredibly long sword slashing the head off a threatening Bigfoot lookalike. When opened out to reveal front and back cover together, the painting reveals the corpse-strewn, gore-soaked path the barbarian has fought his way along just to reach this new enemy (including the innards of a giant spider he has hacked completely in two).

The book's introduction further reveals the game's savage purpose in its very first sentence: "BLOODBATH is a brutal, bloodthirsty game of combat, death, and exploration of a barbaric world called Helboria." This page also sports a rather gruesome image of a boyish thief backstabbing some sort of horned humanoid. On the very next page, we learn that characters in the BLOODBATH game have four attributes: Might, BMC, Bloodlust, and Skill. Might serves roughly as strength; Bloodlust translates roughly to willpower; Skill is roughly intelligence. Hit points in the game are represented by BMC, which stands for Body Mutilation Capacity. Had enough? No? How about if I tell you that characters who score more than four points of damage on a foe (after armor and dodge reductions, if any) must reference a special Damage Chart with eight entries ranging from "Bloody Wound" and "Artery Severed," the two lowest entries, to "Pulped" and "Where's the Mop?", the two highest. I'll spare you the descriptions given for each of these headings.

Remember, though, that the game is not just about "brutal, bloodthirsty . . . combat." It is also about "exploration of a barbaric world." That barbarism is partly evident upon viewing the map. The world is named Hel. In one corner is an Isle of Gor (spelled "Gore" in the book itself). The major portion of the continent illustrated on the map is called Helboria, with Wild Lands to the west and Civilized Lands—such as Mekamatamia, Thranesia, Bulgaria, and Unsettled (more about this last in a moment)—to the south. The monster names and descriptions also reflect this barbaric atmosphere, with creatures such as black death, death beasts, and horrors, as well as ratmen, lizard men, trolls, and the like.

In terms of mechanics, the game is fairly straightforward and simple. Combat begins with an initiative roll, with bonuses for Bloodlust, and high numbers go first. A short list of actions dictates what a character can and cannot accomplish in a



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turn. Characters can move six hexes' distance in a round, unless burdened by armor and the like. Facing has an effect on which foes can be attacked, and hexes of distance apply penalties to ranged weapon rolls. Attacks are made by rolling 3d6 versus the appropriate talent rating (as are all skill rolls), possibly with penalties for facing or distance. If a hit is scored, the attacker rolls 2d6 for damage, adds any Might and weapon bonuses, subtracts for any armor the foe is wearing, and for Dodge if the foe succeeds at a skill roll, then applies the remainder to the foe.

Toward the end of the book, after the goodly list of monsters, the game also contains a small dungeon-crawl type of sample adventure, the sort you'd expect in a barbaric game of bloodthirsty combat.

I applaud the game's producer for setting a clear goal and achieving it. But this is definitely an amateurish product. For example, the game has a number of rather silly aspects to it—things such as the unsettled region mentioned above having been included in the Civilized Lands, or the arrow on the map pointing the way to the Lost Continent of Dara. Similarly, I was a bit taken aback to realize that plate armor reduces a character's movement to zero! (Technically, you might construe the charge rules to allow the character a chance to move, but the rules aren't clear on this point.) What's more, the text is full of typographical errors, slipshod sentences, and just plain mistakes—many of them humorous. For example, everyone to whom I've shown the game has stumbled over the list of components, which includes a playing field divided into hexes to hinder mine movement. Literally, it says to "deter" mine movement, with "deter" being at the end of one line and "mine" being at the beginning of the next. It takes a moment to realize that the text intends to say that the hexes are to "deter-mine" movement. As another example, the sample adventure seems to refer to the characters climbing a horse; it takes a second for the reader to realize "mount" means "mountain" here. Lest I seem to be quibbling, let me point out that after reading this far through such error-filled text, a person is necessarily in the frame of mind to question nearly every word, which adds to the problem.

Taking everything into consideration, as a collector, I'm glad to have a copy of this game, and I enjoyed reading through it. What's more, I like the basics of the combat system, though it has a few holes in it. But as a parent, I won't be sharing the game with my children, and I'd be a bit nervous if I saw them coming home with a copy, just on the basis of its presentation.

BLOODCHANT* game

38-page, 5½" x 8½" rulebook,
8½" x 11" world map, 5½" x 11" hex
map, counter sheet
T.C. International \$3.95
Design: Troy Christensen
Development: Troy Christensen
Cover: Amanda Dee
Interior Art: Amanda Dee, Mike Semsel,
Mike Barnes

The BLOODCHANT game is a companion product to the BLOODBATH game. Its cover painting is considerably less violent than that of its predecessor, but the back cover contains a textual description that makes the product's similarity of approach clear, including the following bit [quoted letter by letter, rather than interrupting with multiple "sics"]: "In Bloodchant, wizards will forge bone-jarring, blood curdling spells able to snap a man's mind as easy as a child breaks straws, or render a dragon's body to crimson oatmeal!" Clearly, this game is a fit mate for the BLOODBATH game.

Attributes in this game are the same as in its predecessor, and the mechanics work basically the same way. The major change is that spells are included instead of combat talents. The game also includes a number of additional monsters to supplement the list in the BLOODBATH game.

The BLOODCHANT game is no better or worse than its predecessor. The text is still barbaric (pun intended): More of the savage world of Helboria is revealed, and humorous errors still abound. Consider, for example, the first sentence of the Ghost description: "Nothing is more horrifying than to see a specter walk through a solid wall and gaze upon its flesh crumbling away revealing a maggot ridden skull." Note the gruesomeness of the description, as well as the fact that the sentence construction has the specter gazing upon its own crumbling flesh. A few example spell names will also serve to convey this savagery, salted with textual error. Sample spells include "Ghastly Vorpal of Dire," "Putrid Wave of Devastation," "Whizzing Horror," "Apocolypian Thunder," and "Mending of Massive Mutilation." Even stranger is the fact that *all* necromancy magics are healing spells!

For a summation of my recommendations concerning this game's suitability, see the final paragraph of the BLOODBATH review, above.

ADVANCED PHANTASM ADVENTURES* game

112-page Player's Handbook, 96-page
Gamemaster's Handbook
T. C. International Price n/a
Design: Troy Christensen
Editing: Troy Christensen
Cover: Not credited
Interior art: Not credited

According to the BLOODCHANT game, as of 1988, the PHANTASM ADVENTURES game was the "biggest fantasy game in Japan." Apparently, the ADVANCED PHANTASM ADVENTURES game is the revised, English-language publication of those rules.

Physically, the game consists of two books with heavy-paper covers, punched and bound with plastic strips, as done in many photocopy stores. The interior text is fairly large and easy to read, typically divided into two columns, sometimes with a narrow sidebar of auxiliary text. Occasionally, the type becomes much denser, in places where the writer obviously wanted to get a lot of material for one topic onto a few pages. In general, large headings break the text into manageable pieces, with a fair number of illustrations for variety and illumination. Overall, the illustrations are unusual but respectable. (At first, I thought many of them were pieces garnered from a century ago, they have that sort of engraved-line quality and dense shading, but I find them too specific to the text and too fantastic in subject for that to be the case.) A multitude of tables supplement the text, typically collected into sections of their own.

The introduction in the Players' Handbook states that the game is designed for "incredible developmental possibilities," yet is "simple enough to be easily played and expanded." I would agree that the game is very flexible—at least in terms of the sheer number of types of characters that can be generated—but it is hardly simple or easy. Rather, this is a number-intensive product, particularly in terms of character generation, and one that requires quite a bit of rules reference during play.

At first, I found the game to be rather exciting. The idea of rating characters' stats both by racial base and by personal variation is interesting. This allows a great degree of personal variance within a race, and when stats are to be compared between members of two different races—as in an arm-wrestling match, for instance—multiplying the racial stat by the personal stat makes the difference between even the strongest goblin and the weakest giant immediately evident. And some undoubtedly will be glad to know that you can choose characters from fifty-five different races (though as GM, I prefer to keep my bugbears and trolls as monsters rather than player characters).

The general approach to magic is also exciting, with designers of spell-casters deciding what "realms" their characters' casting powers come from—such things as a deity, spoken phrases, gestures, special instruments, symbols, components, and the like. In other words, you decide whether your character speaks and gestures to cast a spell, or holds an object while invoking a deity, or gestures with an

object, to name just a few of the many possibilities. Furthermore, you even choose among options to determine how wieldy or unwieldy the method is, how fast it regenerates energy, how much energy it yields, and what effect it has on casting time and chance of success. Then you decide what circles of magic to specialize in, which determines what spells are available to your character. Note that this all means that while two players might end up with the same spell for their characters, the dramatic effects of casting that spell are quite different—a nice storytelling element. In terms of flexibility, spells can be modified as they're thrown, to speed one up at the cost of accuracy, for example, and characters can spend experience on the spot for emergency power points.

This freedom of choice is also evident in terms of the skill system. Players are given beginning experience points with which to purchase desired skills, with guidelines given by a character's chosen clan—e.g., a professional club, such as military, religious, crime, trade, etc. Certain skills are required purchases for members of a particular clan, and some list multipliers for the cost of learning magical spells. Magical ability is also dictated somewhat by the race decided upon.

Actually generating a character reveals, however, just how number-, table-, and rules-intensive the game really is. (It doesn't help that the promised character sheet is not included.) First, you choose a race and write down nine racial stats plus a height base and move rating. Then you begin collecting personal stat modifiers for nationality, town size, clan type, and clan rank. Now you roll 2d10 for each of those personal stats and add the modifiers you've noted. Then you refer that number to a table, to determine the actual personal stat value. Don't throw away the original number, though, because you'll be spending your experience on it during play, and coming back to the conversion table to convert the new number to a new stat value. Then you determine a god worshipped, if any. There are special restrictions and abilities to be gained from doing so. Now determine exact clan background and resulting age. From clan, you decide upon skills. Just as the numbers you rolled for personal stats are converted to a value using a conversion table, you spend experience to buy levels of skill, which are converted using a table to a numerical value, based upon the skill's related stat, the number of levels purchased, and the cost per level as dictated by the character's guild. Decimal values are retained for a "slim chance" rule: e.g., if you have a success chance of 12.6 and roll a 13 (the game uses 1d20 for skill tests), there is a 6 in 10 chance that the skill actually succeeds.

If your character is to cast magic, age

will be affected by that as well, and you'll need to make the decisions mentioned earlier, concerning realm and the like. (Unfortunately, I still haven't figured out how to determine the effect levels for the various aspects of those realms.) Then you'll have to decide which circles to use and roll to see what spells are available to the character.

In any case, you'll also need to generate starting money and buy initial equipment. Then you choose three personal goals for the character, from a list of samples, which affect how the character gains experience points during play.

Combat is a bit number intensive as well. For initiative, each character has three different PSNs (Phase Sequence Numbers): one for melee combat, one for missile combat, and one for spell-casting. At the beginning of the turn, you decide which type of action your character will take, then roll 1d10 and add it to the appropriate PSN. Totals higher than 20 allow actions in more than one phase of the turn. The actual course of activity your character performs may consist of one or more action types (draw weapon, go berserk, fall prone, etc.), each of which counts as anything from half an action to three actions, in terms of elapsed time. (Actually, this sounds more confusing than it really is, but it does require a lot of reference to the book during play.) Any attacks are rolled on 1d20, with numerous possible modifiers (again requiring frequent reference to the book). There are also rules for how many attackers of what size may attack a target of a particular size, how to find spent ammunition after combat, chance of missile breakage, equations for damage from falling and throwing, movement and coordination effects of armor, and suchlike, plus a fairly lengthy table of special tactics such as throwing sand in the eyes, etc., adding a bit of storytelling to combat.

Finally, every skill in the game has its own critical success and fumble chart, again adding a bit of storytelling to play but also requiring even more reference to the rulebook.

Given the preceding reviews, it should be noted that the ADVANCED PHANTASM ADVENTURES game is somewhat more carefully worded than the BLOODBATH and BLOODCHANT games. Nonetheless, it is just as prone to spelling and grammatical errors. Also, while it strives for realism in such things as how much water a character needs per day in a desert, it has significant lapses in logic at other places, such as in its description of the game world's solar system. For example, while the world nearest the sun is quite reasonably a tiny, barren rock, and the second is a large hot world, the third has a frozen atmosphere, and the fourth is the Earth-like one. I have to wonder how that frozen planet exists in that slot, especially given

that the sixth planet, much farther away, is an ocean world. And as for the fifth, it is described as an airless moon. No mention is made of it orbiting any world, however.

Again, I'm glad to have had a chance to peruse this game. And I imagine I'll keep playing with its magic system in particular. But I can't really recommend it as a finished product.

If you're interested in these products, write to:

Troy Christensen International
1340 Beachwood Street NE
Grand Rapids MI 49505-3831

DUEL* game

36-page rulebook
Crunchy Frog Enterprises \$7.95

Design: Paul Arden Lidberg and Raymond A. Greer

Development: Bruce Harlick

Cover: Phil Morrissey

Interior Art: Phil Morrissey, Margaret Schnepf Carspecken, and Marty Salzman

It was roughly one year ago that I first made the acquaintance of Paul Lidberg by phone. In that conversation, we got to reminiscing about old game systems in general, and about all the fun we'd each had with Metagaming's THE FANTASY TRIP* game in particular. That role-playing system started out as the MELEE* and WIZARD* games, designed by Steve Jackson before he became famous and started his own company. Each consisted of a pocket-sized booklet with a folded map and "cut-your-own" counter sheet, and presented a very tactical game of individual combat: The MELEE game with warriors, and the WIZARD with . . . you guessed it. Before long, these booklets were expanded into full-fledged ADVANCED MELEE and ADVANCED WIZARD books, which, together with a gamemaster's volume entitled IN THE LABYRINTH, made up THE FANTASY TRIP role-playing game (more commonly called simply TFT). Unfortunately, when Metagaming went out of business, TFT went out of print, and despite a fanatically loyal following (I went so far as to run a TFT fanzine a few years ago), has since become virtually extinct.

Paul told me in that phone conversation that he wanted to create a new game to fill that hole, something simple but highly tactical. The result of that desire is the DUEL game, which fills roughly the same niche as the ADVANCED MELEE and ADVANCED WIZARD books combined, but in a simpler, more abstract manner (i.e., in fewer pages). The debt of the DUEL game to TFT is evident in the general shape of its character-creation rules, but beyond that, the game definitely takes its own, very interesting direction.

In terms of physical presentation, the DUEL game consists of one 8½" x 11"



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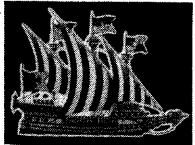
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book done almost entirely in black and white—the cover has a bit of red on the front and back. The cover is plain paper, apparently the same stock as the interior, which means that the book won't stand up to a lot of wear. But that aside, it is a good-looking product. A couple of Phil Morrissey illustrations grace (and I mean that verb literally) the front and back cover, and the text inside is exceedingly legible type in two columns, broken nicely by a number of good illustrations. One odd thing is that there is no Table of Contents; you simply have to leap into the book to find out what's contained within it. Fortunately, that is not too difficult a proposition in a book this small, and the text headings are well arranged and written for quick recognition of topic.

Page one contains a short and simple introduction to role-playing in general and the DUEL game specifically. Here we learn that the game uses two types of dice: d10 and d5. No explanation is given for why the unusual d5, but I suspect it is because five is a much more "friendly" number to us humans, it being the number of digits on one extremity, and half of 10, the main number upon which we base our math, and the number of faces on the other die used in this game.

Pages 2-6 explain the basics about characters, with a nice narrative introduction. We learn here that characters have three primary stats: Mind, Body, and Agility. Oddly enough, although the text presents them in that order, the first sample character in the book (the villain of the introductory narrative) lists them as Body, Agility, and Mind—reminiscent of TFT's Strength, Dexterity, and Intelligence—and all the other characters later in the book list them in reverse TFT order. But whereas TFT stats are based on a 3d6 skill system, with human stats averaging 11 and maxing out at 18, the DUEL game's are based upon a 1d10 skill system and have no cap. As a consequence, there is less of a bell curve to design, meaning that stats in this game can range much lower (5 being average), and theoretically can rise to infinity. As another prime difference between the games, TFT's main stats pretty much dictate secondary things such as hit points, number of skills, and skill level; the relation is a bit less strict in the DUEL game. DUEL game stats are still primary, and basic hit points, movement, and skill level are determined from them, but everything is actually bought with "build points," which means that a player can purchase a skill level higher than the primary stats dictate, and can even buy additional hit points or movement, if desired.

Pages 7-9 detail the 55 individual skills that can be purchased in this game. Again, the general approach is reminiscent of THE FANTASY TRIP game; though the details are different, they are less strict.

Notes are included for inventing your own skills to supplement these as you see fit. As a package, the skills detailed in the game have a decidedly medieval fantasy feel. But it is worth mentioning that the text often speaks of the game as being universal in nature, especially when describing upcoming expansions such as the MEGA-DUEL* game.

Pages 10-13, and half a column on 14, explain the DUEL game's magic system. It is a flexible, open-ended approach; in fact, the back cover of the book guarantees that "if you find a spell that CAN'T be done, we'll buy back your copy of the game." Basically, magic in this game is divided into five "Aspects," those being Fortification, Alteration, Vigor, Journey, and Enhancement. Fortification allows mages to raise their own primary stats; Alteration allows them to raise or lower another character's stats; Vigor allows them to adjust hit points of themselves, another character, or even an object; Journey allows them to adjust something's movement rate; and Enhancement allows them to affect the primary stats of an object. Five build points spent on any one of these aspects yields a d5 worth of effect, and additional build points can be spent to make an aspect affect larger areas. The game lists Mind stat limits for how many d5s a character can purchase in any one aspect, how much area effect can be bought, and how many d5s total may be rolled at a given time (for when more than one aspect is used at once).

Spells, then, are simply applications of these aspects. Want to send a telepathic message? Just use Journey to increase the movement rate of your thought from inside your own head to the head of your recipient. Want to make a temporary magic shield out of thin air? Do literally that, using the aspect of Enhancement to give the air before you a Body score. Want to throw a bolt of lightning at a foe? Just use the aspect of Vigor to lower your foe's hit points. (Note that normal ranged attack modifiers apply, though.) Anything you can imagine can be done, just by creatively applying the various aspects. The game lists many example spells to serve as a guide to creating your own.

Overall, I'm favorably impressed by this magic system. Admittedly, it has a bit of the same problem from which the FANTASY HERO* game suffered—namely that most role-players have a difficult time seeing past the numbers of an open-ended system and coming up with truly wondrous spells. But because it is simpler than that system, it is a bit less prone to that trouble, and the number of example spells go a long way toward getting players into the right frame of mind. It should be mentioned, however, that this system is not entirely open-ended: it forces its own artificial constraints upon play. As examples, 1) learning magic is costly enough

that characters are driven to concentrate on one or two aspects, which limits them from being "all-around" spell-casters; 2) the combined "raise or lower" nature of the aspects encourages strange combinations such as Father Robinson's worship of the God of War (lower hit points) and Healing (raise hit points), and 3) illusions aren't covered in the sample spells, and while they can be done by area-effect thought transmission, that makes them pretty costly, which goes against the grain of most fantasy spell logic. But don't let these relatively minor complaints give you the wrong idea; this is an impressively flexible and dramatic spell system.

After the spell rules come four and a half pages of equipment and equipment rules. Again, the medieval emphasis is evident, although there are sample firearms included. One thing obviously different here from the TFT rules is that there are no strength limitations on what weapons can be used by what characters. Only costliness dictates what weapons a character can wield.

Next come four one-page treatments of sample characters, as guides to creating your own. They are followed by a page of notes concerning fantasy races: humans, elves, dwarves, fuzzyfoots, and orcs, the standard fare. Given the impressiveness of Phil Morrissey's various canine-people illustrations in the book—including on the cover and the races page itself—I wish at least a few notes would have been given about them.

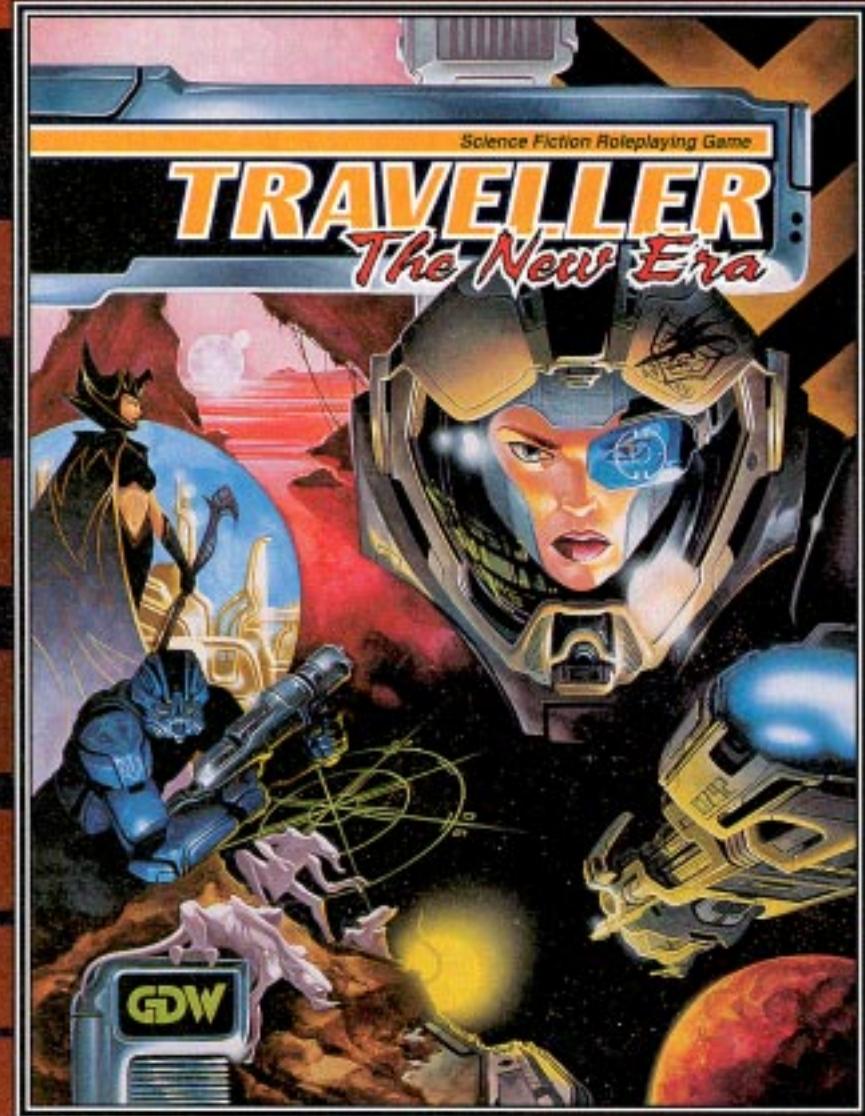
With all the rules related to character generation now out of the way, the book turns to an explanation of combat, roughly three pages plus a two-page example. The combat system is presented very clearly and is intuitively satisfying. It plays very quickly. Unfortunately, given the game's relatively low weapon-damage ratings and relatively high armor ratings and hit points, combat generally takes a long time, with turn after turn progressing with little or no damage done. The problem isn't in hitting a foe—even a relatively novice character will hit as often as not in this game—rather, it is that the weapons are relatively bloodless.

Following the combat example are three pages of background, including one full-page map. Rationales are included here for major movers and shakers among the duchies of the area. It seems to be an interesting and believable background to play within.

The book finishes with an admirable four-page sample adventure. I'll just warn you: Build a fighter when you play it. There is a typographical error in paragraph B: Going left should take you to paragraph O, not D.

In summation, the DUEL game is an engagingly written product with a number of creative but sensible innovations. However, it does have some serious flaws.

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The greatest problem, I believe, is that, given the limited range of a d10 for skill tests, the relatively good starting levels of beginning characters' skills, and especially the open-ended nature of the main stats and the skill ratings, characters can progress fairly rapidly to the point where they can easily pass pretty much any skill roll—unless the referee imposes horrendously high negative modifiers to counter those skills. In effect, I think the game is a good design that needs a bit more development and playtesting. I look forward to seeing if the MEGA-DUEL game resolves any of these issues.

TOY WAR* game

12-page rulebook
Crunchy Frog Enterprises \$4.95
Design: Paul Arden Lidberg
Additional writing: Raymond A. Greer
Cover: Phil Morrissey
Interior art: Phil Morrissey

Here's a very nice, fast, and simple set of rules for conducting wars with things from your toy box. (Okay, maybe you don't have a toy box, per se. Maybe you display your toys on shelves as I do.)

Physically, the book is similar to the DUEL game book: It's 12 black-and-white

pages with a paper cover, with big type well organized by easy-to-spot headings, and nicely illustrated.

The rules are extremely simple. Toys are divided into various types: Soldier, cowboy, Indian, space alien, robots, mutants, etc. for figures; and cars, trucks, mole machines, tanks, jets, etc. for vehicles. Each type is listed with a particular attack value, which is the number you need (or less) on 1d6 to hit a target. The attack value also works as hit points. The other stat on each toy is size, which is determined by measuring its longest dimension and consulting a simple chart. Toy movement in inches is five times the size stat, which is also the range of a particular toy's firing or throwing weapons. Toys without a gun or throwing object can attack only targets they are next to, and if they have no melee weapons, they can ram only (taking a bit of damage themselves in the process). The higher the attacker-to-defender size ratio, the more damage the defender takes in an attack.

Some toys, like trucks, can carry others, and certain vehicles can fly or travel through water. Terrain is basically furniture, blankets, and the like.

The book contains several sample scenarios, or you can create your own. In any case, each side in the conflict gets a par-

ticular number of points to spend at the toy box. A toy costs its attack value times its size.

In all, this is quite a good game. The rules are deceptively simple. That is to say, they are so easy that it might seem there isn't much to them. But a closer look reveals a certain genius to their design.

CRITTER COMMANDOS* Game, Deluxe Edition

30-page rulebook, 12-page Compendium, one sheet of sample vehicle stats
Crunchy Frog Enterprises \$12.95
Rulebook design: Paul Arden Lidberg
Rulebook cover: Ken Mitchroney
Rulebook interior art: Ken Mitchroney, Mike McMurry, Jim Groat, and Chuck Matheny
Compendium design: Paul Arden Lidberg, Steve Harmon, and D. B. Lincoln
Compendium editing: D. B. Lincoln
Compendium cover: Phil Morrissey
Interior art: Phil Morrissey, Scott A. H. Ruggels, Ken Mitchroney, and Chuck Matheny

The original CRITTER COMMANDOS game was released in 1989. Basically, it is a fairly standard set of miniatures rules

Continued on page 38

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NAKED CAME THE SASQUATCH

By John Boston



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Michael Fenberg, editor of a small Sierra Nevada community newspaper, is out to solve a series of grisly killings. He knows that a monster is behind them – but which monster? And whichever one it is, why is it eyeing Fenberg's love interest?

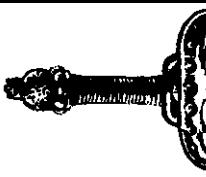
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CONVENTION CALENDAR



Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held;
2. Site and location;
3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
4. Special events offered;
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,

6. Address(es) and telephone number(s) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

WARNING: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the last Monday of each month, two months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the last Monday of October. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been canceled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc.: (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited: (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

★ indicates an Australian convention.

※ indicates a Canadian convention.

● indicates a European convention.

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OASIS 6, May 14-16

FL

This convention will be held at the Altamonte Springs Hilton in Altamonte Springs, Fla. Guests include Connie Willis, Michael Whelan, and Andre Norton. Activities include a dealers' room, an art show and auction, a con suite, panels, videos, and gaming. Registration: \$24 at the door. Write to: OASiS, P.O. Box 940994, Maitland FL 32792-0992; or call Ray at: (407) 725-2383.

BEER & PRETZELS IV, May 15-16

✿

This convention will be held at the Town Hall, Burton on Trent, Staffs, England. Events include a mixture of board, miniatures, war, and role-playing games. Other activities include dealers. Registration: £3.50/day or £6/weekend at the door. Call Phil of Spirit Games at: 0283 511293.

KETTERING GAME CONVENTION VIII

May 15-16

OH

This convention will be held at the Charles I. Lathrem Senior Center in Kettering, Ohio. Events include fantasy role-playing, board, miniatures, and computer games, plus a game auction, and an RPGA™ Network tournament. Registration: \$2/day. Write to: Bob Von Gruenigen, 804 Willowdale Ave., Kettering OH 45429; or call: (513) 298-3224.

MADISON GAMES CON '93, May 15-16

WI

This convention will be held at the Quality Inn South in Madison, Wis. Events include role-playing, war, miniatures, and board games. Other activities include a games auction. Judges and dealers are welcome. Registration: \$8/weekend or \$5/day. Write to: Pegasus Games, 6640 Odana Rd., Madison WI 53719; or call: (608) 833-4263.

ADVENTURE GAMEFEST '93, May 21-23

OR

This convention will be held at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland, Oreg. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games in all genres. Other activities include door and event prizes, a game auction, and a miniatures-painting contest. Registration: \$15/weekend or \$7/day. Write to: Adventure Games Northwest, Inc., 6517 NE Alberta, Portland OR 97218; or call: (503) 282-6856.

CONWEST '93, May 21-23

NM

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson Plaza hotel in Albuquerque, N.M. Events include numerous AD&D® game tournaments. Registration: \$7.50 plus \$3 event fee. Write to: CONWEST, 6210 Indian School NE D-323, Albuquerque NM 87110; or call Harold at: (505) 883-9553.

ECLIPSE '93, May 21-23

MO

This gaming convention will be held at the Ramada Inn in Columbia, Mo. Guests include Jean Rabe, David "Zeb" Cook, Tim Beach, Rick

Harris, and Bruce Nesmith. Activities include many RPGA™ sanctioned events and war gaming. Registration: \$10 preregistered; \$12 at the door. Write to: Jim Herring, 3702 W. Truman Blvd., Ste. 223, Jefferson City MO 65109; or call: (314) 635-2441.

ATLANTA ART FESTIVAL, May 22-23

GA

This convention will be held at the Cobb County Civic Center in Marietta, Ga. Activities include SF, visionary, and fantasy art. Write to: Imagine That, P.O. Box 1133, Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44223; or call: (216) 923-8823 days.

LEGENDS '93, May 22-23

TN

This convention will be held at the Shoney's Inn near Opryland in Nashville, Tenn. Guests include Todd Johnson, Larry Stroman, Dwayne Turner, and Frank Turner. Activities include gaming, comics, and *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* merchandise. Registration: \$7/day or \$10/weekend at the door. Write to: LEGENDS, 514 Broad St., Rome GA; or call: (706) 234-8210.

NEWPORT MINI-CON '93, May 22

RI

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson in Middletown, R.I. Events include AD&D®, RAVENLOFT®, SHADOWRUN*, and BATTLETECH* games. Registration: \$10 at the door. Write to: NEWPORT MINI-CON, c/o SMAGS, P.O. Box 6295, Fall River MA 02724.

ORGANIZED KAHN-FUSION, May 22-23

PA

This gaming convention will be held at the Embers in Carlisle, Pa. Guests include Greg Porter and Greg Costikyan. Activities include open gaming, panels, dealers, a figure-painting contest, and readings. Registration: up to \$12. Write to: M. Foner's Games Only Emporium, 200 3rd St., New Cumberland PA 17070; or call: (717) 774-6676.

FURRYCON '93, May 28-31

✿

This convention will be held at the Old Ship hotel in Brighton, England. Events include board, role-playing, and "face-to-face" play-by-mail games. Other activities include card-game events. Registration: £5/day or £12/weekend. Write to: SFC Press, 42 Wynnadle Rd., London E18 1DX, UNITED KINGDOM.

GAMEX '93, May 28-31

CA

This convention will be held at the Airport Hyatt hotel in Los Angeles, Calif. All types of strategy, family, and adventure board, role-playing, miniatures, and computer gaming will be featured. Other activities include flea markets, an auction and a dealers' area. Write to: STRATEGICON, P.O. Box 3849, Torrance CA 90510-3849; or call: (310) 326-9440.

GAME-A-THON '93, May 28-30

NY

This convention will be held at the Sheraton Inn at the airport in Albany, N.Y. Events include RPGA™ Network events, plus miniatures, board, and role-playing games. Other activities include a benefit for the Farano Center for Children. Write to: Michael J. Rivet, Jr., GAME-A-THON, 602 Foxwood Dr., Clifton Park NY 12065; or call: (518) 371-8953.

GAMESCAUSUS II, May 28-31

CA

This convention will be held at the Airport Hilton in Oakland, Calif. Events include AD&D®, CALL OF CTHULHU*, CHAMPIONS*, PARANOIA*, TRAVELLER*, AXIS & ALLIES*, CAR WARS*, STAR WARS*, BATTLETECH*, and CIVILIZATION* games. Other activities include a

dealers' room, a painting contest, a flea market, and a 24-hour-a-day movie room. Registration: \$25 preregistered; \$30 at the door. Judges are welcome and will receive discounts. Write (and checks payable) to: Trigaming Assoc., P.O. Box 4867, Walnut Creek CA 94596-0867.

NORTHWEST GAMEFEST, May 28-30 OR

This gaming convention will be held at the Monarch hotel in Clackamas, Oreg. Events include role-playing and board games. Other activities include a costume contest, a dealers' room, and a video arcade. Registration: \$15 preregistered, \$18/weekend or \$10/day at the door. Write to: NRM, P.O. Box 6068, Salem OR 97304; or call: (503) 982-1232 evenings.

MIGSCON XIV, May 29-30 *

This historical gaming convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Hamilton, Ontario. Events include WRG 7th-Edition Ancients*, DBA* and ASL* games. Other activities include games set in the following periods: ancient, medieval, renaissance, Seven-Year War, napoleonic, colonial, ACW, WWII, and modern. Dealers are welcome. Write to: MIGSCON XIV c/o P.O. Box 37013, Barton Postal Outlet, Ontario, CANADA L8L 8E9; or call: (416) 351-7207.

TWINCON '93, May 29-31 MN

This convention will be held at the Thunderbird hotel in Minneapolis, Minn. Events include dozens of role-playing, war, and miniatures games, plus a con suite. Registration: \$30 at the door, and there are no game fees. Write to: TWINCON, P.O. Box 8010, Minneapolis MN 55408.

CONMAN '93, June 4-6 NH

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson in Manchester, N.H. Events include AD&D®, CALL OF CTHULHU*, TORG*, TOON*, and RPGATM Network events. Other activities include a miniatures-painting contest, an art show, demos, a vendors' area, and a benefit for the New Hampshire AIDS Foundation. Registration: \$17/weekend, single-day rates are available. Write to: CONMAN, P.O. Box 842, Manchester NH 03101.

ILLINICON '93, June 4-6 IL

This gaming convention will be held at the Hendrick House dorm on the campus of the University of Illinois. Events include AD&D®, SHADOWRUN*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, BAT-TECH*, and STAR FLEET BATTLES* games. Other activities include a game auction, a miniatures-painting contest, movies, dealers, and open gaming. Registration: \$5, plus a one-time \$3 event fee. GMs are welcome. Send an SASE to: Urbana Gaming House, 904 W. Green, Box 1801, Urbana IL 61801; or call: (217) 328-8053 early evenings.

CONQUEST I, June 11-13 MD

This convention will be held at the Ramada Inn in Hagerstown, Md. Guests include Jonathan Frid, Eric Menyuk, John Anthony Blake, and Sandy Petersen. Activities include an art room, dealers, workshops, a charity auction, and a video room. Registration: \$30 preregistered before May 15. Send an SASE to: CONQUEST I, P.O. Box 1007, Hagerstown MD 21741-1007; or call: (301) 733-4649.

HEROES '93, June 11-13 NC

This convention will be held at the Charlotte International Trade Center in Charlotte, N.C.

Guests include Mark Bagley, Dick Giordano, George Perez, and Dave Sim. Activities include contests, art seminars, workshops, and exhibits. Registration: \$25/weekend or \$10/day. Write to: HEROES '93, P.O. Box 9181, Charlotte NC 28299; or call: (704) 394-8404.

SAN DIEGO GAME CON IX, June 11-12 CA

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson-Harborview hotel in San Diego, Calif. Events include strategic, board, role-playing, and card games. Registration: \$15 until May 31. Write to: SDGC, 4409 Mission Ave., #J208, Oceanside CA 92057; or call: (619) 599-9619.

BOGGLECON '93, June 12 PA

This convention, originally scheduled for March 13 and postponed due to heavy snow, will be held at the Wind Gap Fire Hall in Wind Gap, Penn. Events include RPGATM Network events and other role-playing games plus war games. Other activities include a painted miniatures contest, a games raffle, and a dealers' area. Registration: \$7 until June 1; \$10 at the door. Game fees are usually \$1. Send an SASE to: Michael Griffith, 118 S. Broadway, Wind Gap PA 18091; or call: (215) 863-5178.

CAPITALCON IX, June 12-13 IL

This convention will be held at the Prairie Capital Convention Center in Springfield, Ill. Events include role-playing, miniatures, war, and board games. Other activities include an auction, a flea market, and a figure-painting contest. Registration: \$10 at the door. Write to: John Holtz, 400 E. Jefferson St. #508, Springfield IL 62701; or call: (217) 753-2656.

RECONN '93, June 12-13 CT

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Norwalk, Conn. Events include role-playing, miniatures, war, and board games. Other activities include a movie room and a dealers' area. Write to: Jim Wiley, Gaming Guild, 100 Hoyt St. #2C, Stamford CT 06905; or call: (203) 969-2396.

ATLANTICON '93, June 18-20 MD

This convention will be held at the Baltimore Convention Center in Baltimore, Md. Guests include numerous gaming personalities. Activities include role-playing, miniatures, and board games, plus a dealers' area. Registration: \$20 preregistered; \$30 at the door. Write to: ADF Inc., P.O. Box 91, Beltsville MD 20704; or call: (301) 345-1858.

CONTINUUM '93, June 18-20 MO

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Convention Center in Cape Girardeau, Mo. Guests include Mark Lenard and Robin Curtis. Activities include gaming, a dealers' room, an art show and auction, a masquerade, a costume contest, a video room, and a charity auction. Registration: \$35/weekend before May 18; \$40 thereafter. Single-day rates are available. Send an SASE to: CONTINUUM '93, 1617 Lyndhurst, Cape Girardeau MO 63701; or call: (314) 334-4386.

G.A.M.CON '93, June 18-20 IL

This convention will be held at the Day's Inn in Quincy, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a dealers' area. Write to: Andy Bowen, 7 Whispering Oaks, Quincy IL 62301; or call: (217) 228-2556.

GLATHRICON '93, June 18-20

IN
This convention will be held at the Executive Inn in Evansville, Ind. Events include AD&D®, MARVEL SUPER HEROES™, SHADOWRUN*, and CHILL* games. Other activities include an art show and auction, a masquerade, panels, dealers, and a charity event for the American Cancer Society. Registration: \$15 before May 1; \$20 thereafter. Write to: GLATHRICON, c/o Evansville Gaming Guild, P.O. Box 15414, Evansville IN 47716; or call: (812) 477-9508.

HEXAGON HI, June 18-20

AZ
This convention will be held at the Camelview Resort in Scottsdale, Ariz. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures gaming. Other activities include a miniatures-painting contest, a game auction, dealers, anime, panels, guests, and computer gaming. Registration: \$10 preregistered; \$15 at the door. Write to: HEXACON, P.O. Box 62613, Phoenix AZ 85082; or call: (602) 497-9554.

MICHICON '93, June 18-20

MI
This convention will be held at the Southfield Civic Center in Southfield, Mich. Events include board, role-playing, and miniatures games. Other activities include a dealers' room. Registration: \$16/weekend or \$9/day preregistered; \$18/weekend or \$10/day at the door. Write to: Metro Detroit Gamers, M-93 Pre-reg., P.O. Box 656, Wyandotte MI 48192.

NEW ORLEANS SF & FANTASY FESTIVAL

LA
June 18-20

This convention will be held at the Clarion hotel in New Orleans, La. Guests include Robert Silverberg, Walter Jon Williams, George Alec Effinger, and Aaron Allston. Activities include 24-hour open gaming. Registration: \$20 before May 15. Write to: NOSF3 1993, P.O. Box 791089, New Orleans LA 70179-1089; or call: (504) 837-0125.

RIVERCON '93, June 18-20

OH
This convention will be held at the campus of the University of Cincinnati, College of Applied Science in Cincinnati, Ohio. Events include role-playing, miniatures, computer, and board games. Other activities include a dealers' area, open gaming, and door prizes. Registration: \$10 before June 4; \$15 thereafter. Write to: RPS RIVERCON, Univ. of Cincinnati, College of Applied Science, 2220 Victory Pkwy., Cincinnati OH 45206; or call: (513) 232-6213.

WYVERCON '93, June 18-20

WA
This convention will be held at the Skagit Valley Fairgrounds in Mount Vernon, Wash. Events include a wide variety of role-playing and board games. Other activities include a miniatures-painting contest, videos, door prizes and a dealers' room. Registration: \$15 preregistered before May 1; \$20 thereafter. Daily rates are available. Write to: WYVERCON, P.O. Box 2325, Mount Vernon WA 98273; or call Larianne or Todd: (206) 428-5900.

ORIGINS '93, July 1-4

TX
This convention will be held at the Tarrant County Convention Center in Ft. Worth, Tex. Events include hundreds of gaming events, numerous seminars by industry notables, a huge game auction, and over 200 exhibitor booths. Write to: GEMCO, P.O. Box 609, Randallstown MD 21133.

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Cambridge CB1 3LB, England to find out more!

ALOHA CON '93, July 3-4**HI**

This convention will be held at the AIEA High School on Oahu. Events include historical demonstration, an "artist alley," costume and miniatures-painting contests, a charity raffle, an auction, and miniatures, board, and role-playing games including RPGATM Network events. Registration: \$3/day or \$5/weekend. Write to: Just For Fun, 4510 Salt Lake Blvd., Ste. B8, Honolulu HI 96819.

NAMELESS CON '93, July 3**NE**

This convention will be held at the Victoria Hall, Sheepcote Rd., Harrow, Middlesex, England. Events include many role-playing games including RPGATM Network events. Registration: £4. Write to: Darrell Impey, c/o 104 Dorchester Waye, Hayes, Middlesex, UB4 OHY, UNITED KINGDOM.

IV-KHAN, July 9-10**CO**

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn North in Colorado Springs, Colo. Guest of honor is John Stith. Activities include gaming, movies, a dealers' room, a miniatures-painting contest, an art show, and an author's banquet. Registration: \$15 until July 4; \$20 thereafter. There are \$1 game fees. Write to: Miniatures Wargaming Guild, 695 S. 8th St. #55, Colorado Springs CO 80905; or call Perry at: (719) 630-8332.

DOVERCON IX, July 10-11**NH**

This convention will be held at the University of New Hampshire's Memorial Union Building in Durham, N.H. Guests include Barbara Young, editor of DUNGEON® Adventures magazine. Activities include RPGATM Network events and other role-playing, board, and war games, plus seminars, art, costume, and miniatures-painting contests, and a dealers' room. Registration: \$15 preregistered; \$20 at the door. Single-day rates will be available at the door. Write to: DOVERCON, P.O. Box 753, Dover NH 03820.

KINGCON '93, July 16-18*****

This SF/fantasy/gaming convention will be held at the Delta Brunswick hotel in Saint John, N.B. Events include gaming, a costume contest, an art show and auction, and seminars on writing, virtual reality, computer gaming, and haunted houses. Registration: \$20 (Canadian) until July 1; \$25 (Canadian) thereafter. Write to: KINGCON, MPO Box 1212, Saint John, N.B., CANADA E2L 4G7; or call: (902) 542-1798.

GRAND GAME CON '93, July 17**MI**

This convention will be held at American Legion Post #179 in Grand Rapids, Mich. Events include board, war, and role-playing games. Registration: \$5 preregistered; \$7 at the door. Write to: Will Holden, 1023 California N.W., Grand Rapids MI 49504; or call: (616) 454-0112.

STAFFCON '93, July 18*****

This convention will be held on the Staffordshire University campus-Stafford. Guests include Terry Pratchett. Activities include role-playing and on-line games, plus merchants. Prizes will be awarded to competition winners. Registration: £25 including meals, £2 admission fee at the door. Write to: Chris Grice, c/o S.U. Office, Staffordshire Univ., Beaconside, Stafford, ST18 0AD, ENGLAND; or call: (0785) 211738.

IMPACT 3, July 23-25**NE**

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Old Mill in Omaha, Nebr. Guests include

Larry Niven, Marion Zimmer Bradley, and Lucy Synk. Activities include RPGATM Network events, role-playing, miniatures, and board games, an art show and auction, videos, seminars, a masquerade, and dealers. Registration: \$20 before June 1; \$25 thereafter. Write to: IMPACT 3, P.O. Box 4486, Omaha NE 68104-9998; or call Rahlyns at: (402) 345-9362.

OPERATION: GREEN FLAG '93**July 24-25****PA**

This BATTLETECH*-only convention will be held at the Embers in Carlisle, Pa. Events include single and lance competitions, a miniatures-painting contest, gaming, and dealers. Registration costs vary. Write to: M. Foner's Games Only Emporium, 200 3rd St., New Cumberland PA 17070; or call: (717) 774-6676.

GAMEFEST '93 II, July 30-Aug. 1**IL**

This convention will be held at Friends' Hobby Shop in Waukegan, Ill. Events include miniatures, role-playing, and board games. Write to: Friends' Hobby, 1411 Washington, Waukegan IL 60085; or call: (708) 336-0790.

WINDSOR GAMEFEST XI, July 30-Aug. 1*****

This convention will be held at the University of Windsor in Windsor, Ontario. Guests include Richard Tucholka. Activities include board and role-playing games, prizes, special events, contests and movies. Registration: \$7/day or \$12/weekend preregistered; \$8/day or \$15/weekend at the door. Write to: Sandwich Postal Station, P.O. Box 7463 Windsor, Ontario, CANADA.

CANGAMES '93, July 30-Aug. 2*****

This convention will be held at the Citadel Inn in Ottawa, Ontario. Events include role-playing, miniatures, and board games. Other activities include an auction, dealers, movies, and 24-hour gaming. Write to: CANGAMES, P.O. Box 3358, Station D, Ottawa, Ontario, CANADA K1P 6H8.

Important: To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that your notice was received. You might also send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please avoid sending convention notices by fax, as this method has not proved to be reliable.

**Give us the word!**

What do you think of this magazine? What do you like best or want to see changed most? What do you want to see next? Turn to "Letters" and see what others think, then write to us, too!

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Role-playing Reviews

Continued from page 32

with a wacky twist: The forces involved are cartoon figures, battling in a cartoon universe. This gives rise to a rather strange game. It has the normal sorts of rules for initiative, movement, attacks, morale, unit identity, and command figures. But damage ratings are in how many holes a combatant can sustain before falling to pieces, and there are damage ratings for glue guns, rubber mallets, and pies, as well as the normal weapons. Also, there are various other types of cartoonish equipment available—jet packs, stilts, tricycles, giant banana peels, and the like. Finally, the game contains the sort of silly background material you'd expect from a cartoon universe, with strange cultures such as the FROG Federation and the RATZI Empire.

The CRITTER COMMANDOS COMPENDIUM adds a number of new races, as well as role-playing rules for individual characters, and revised vehicle rules. It also includes an article originally published in the SPACE GAMER* magazine, adapting WARHAMMER 40K* game figures to the CRITTER COMMANDOS rules.

Overall, it's a nice package at a reasonable price. Even if you haven't been hankering to run mobs of crazed gorillas with cream pies against giant robots, this game may give you that desire. And in any event, it's a good read.

Lester Smith is a game designer and editor at TSR, Inc., and has worked on projects for various other game companies in the past. He makes something of a hobby of collecting new, small-press products, particularly quirky role-playing games, which explains the focus of his periodic review articles in this magazine.

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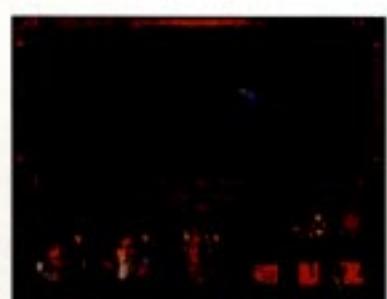


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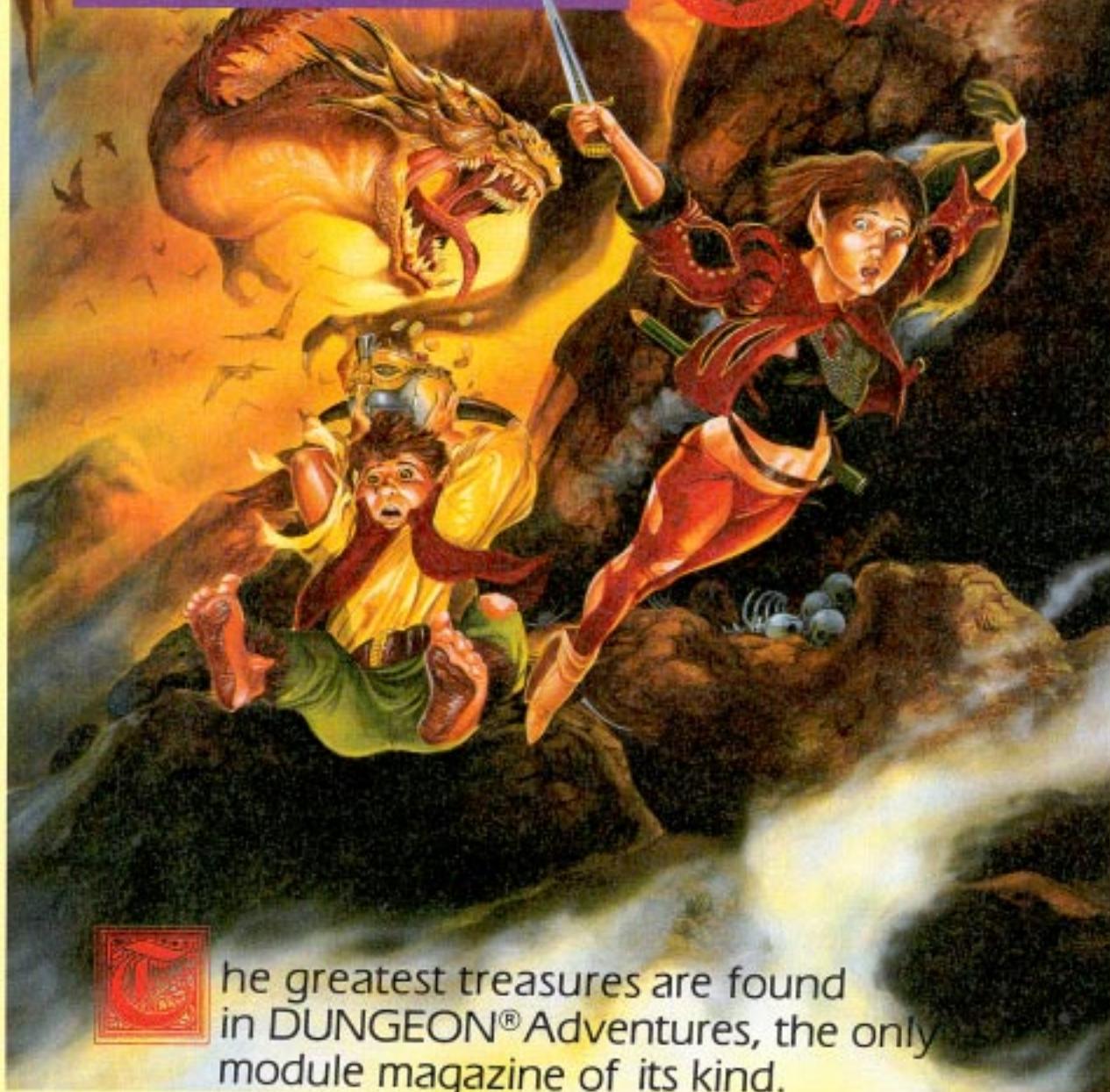


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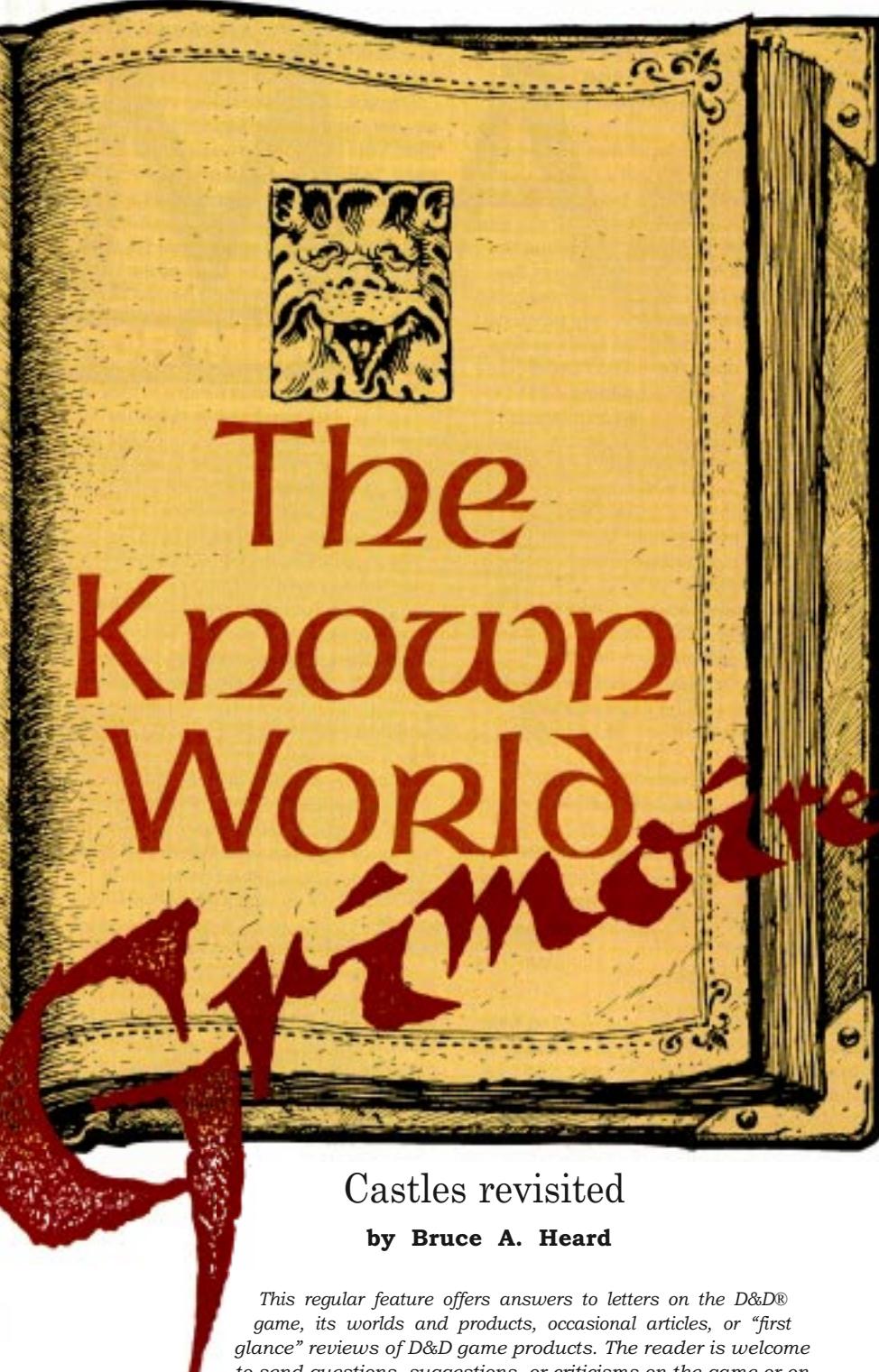
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Castles revisited

by Bruce A. Heard

This regular feature offers answers to letters on the D&D® game, its worlds and products, occasional articles, or "first glance" reviews of D&D game products. The reader is welcome to send questions, suggestions, or criticisms on the game or on the material published here. We can't promise all letters will be answered in this column, but they all will get our attention.

Have you ever tried designing a castle or even a simple keep? The *Rules Cyclopedia* provides details on the time and cost to build fortresses, but one of our readers pointed out that there's little information on figuring out how much space a hundred-troop garrison will need, for example, or even information on outfitting and furnishing a simple keep. What's the

proper size for a granary, how much area will the great hall occupy, and how large should the servant and military quarters be? What or who goes where? How many of them and why? These seem like obscure details, but they affect the way keeps and castles are laid out. To a degree, such decisions affect role-playing as well. This month's *Grimoire* tries to

answer some of these questions in terms simplified for the game.

There are two things to look at when designing a castle. First, you need to know what era this castle takes its inspiration from: Early or late medieval times? Second, how sophisticated is the castle: A simple keep for a baron just starting in the ruling business, or the elaborate castle of a powerful duke or king? This leads to the question: How many people is the place intended to house?

Early in medieval European history, castles were of the *motte and bailey* type, basically a hill surrounded by a ditch, with a wooden building surrounded by a palisade at the top. Fairly simple in design, the center building stood a few stories high, with storage on the ground level, a great hall on the next level (where the lord and his family lived), and an attic above. Just about everything else had to remain in the bailey, in lean-tos or separate buildings. The open area inside the palisade contained the military barracks, kitchen, smithy, stable, etc.

In the later medieval period, castles were constructed as fortresses with stone walls, corner towers, a gatehouse with a drawbridge, and a massive keep. These were far more complicated and housed many more people than the older motte-and-bailey strongholds.

The *Rules Cyclopedia* does a good job of listing all kinds of people dwelling in a large fortress. Their tasks are many and varied, which the design of the castle should reflect. Here is a list of the residents and areas commonly found in a castle, with guidelines for their uses and their sizes in relation to each other.

Living quarters

Lord and lady: Their bedchamber is located on one of the upper floors of the keep, for safety and privacy. This is one of the nicer chambers, around 400-500 square feet. It probably has a fireplace, an adjoining wardrobe or anteroom, and in later castles, an *oriel* overlooking the inner bailey. The ceiling is 9'-10' high. The bed, with its heavy wooden frame and canopy, can be curtained for privacy and warmth, especially if the room has no fireplace. In earlier times, the lord and lady slept in the great hall of the stronghold rather than in private quarters. If your castle is based on those of this earlier period, be sure to check the description of the great hall a few paragraphs down.

Guests: These bedchambers house castle officials working for the lord or the lady, other adult members of the lord's family, and favored guests. In castles of the later period, these rooms can be located in the keep's upper floors or in the towers. For example, the chief steward might live in one of the towers, while the captain of the guard bunks in the upper gatehouse. One of the keep's guest rooms

can also be used as the lady's *solar*, where she enjoys her privacy and spends time quilting or reading poetry. Each of the guest rooms is about 200-300 square feet.

Children: For their safety, the lord's children live on the highest floor of the keep. A total of 30 square feet per child should be enough room. The rest of this floor is partitioned into a servant's room and a guard room for watchmen assigned to the keep's top battlements. Simple wooden panels separate the rooms. The stairs spiral up through the thickness of the keep's outer walls.

Common quarters: Dormitories for the servants and soldiers are cramped and offer little comfort. When furnished with three-tier bunk beds, each room should allow approximately 20 square feet per person. The common servants usually live in a separate building (*servery*) inside the castle walls. A few favored servants have small rooms in the keep. Some sleep in their master's chamber or on straw mats in the great hall. Soldiers are quartered in the gatehouse and towers, or even in a basement beneath the keep or under a main tower.

Gathering rooms

Great hall: It wouldn't be a castle without a great hall! This central area is where the lord, lady, and their guests eat their meals. In earlier castles, the great hall was on the ground floor of the keep. In many castles of the later period, it was moved to the second floor for added safety.

The lord and lady originally slept in this room. Their sleeping area was located opposite the entrance, behind a curtain or a wooden panel. The main area of the great hall might have a U-shaped table, at the center of which the lord and lady sat on massive chairs sometimes topped with a canopy. Guests sat on benches, the less favored ones farthest from the lord.

The great hall should be one of the largest chambers in the keep, with enough room for a sleeping area (if necessary), the table, the lord and lady's chairs, wooden benches, an open area for a troubadour or a jester, perhaps a large fireplace, and plenty of space for servants to come and go in an orderly fashion. The ceiling is fairly high, arching up 14'-20', sometimes with wooden or stone pillars supporting the vault. The castles of wealthy lords often contain an elevated wooden musicians' gallery. A staircase leads to a wooden balcony or an oriel connecting with the lord or lady's chambers (if located above the hall). The lady of the castle and her retinue can use the oriel as a private vantage point overlooking the great hall.

In determining a size for the great hall, allow 500 square feet and add 50 square feet per person, based on the minimum number of guests the great hall is expected to accommodate. The lord's

children and all people of status living in the castle should be counted. A minimum of ten people is not far-fetched here, requiring 1,000 square feet of space (500+[50x10]=1,000).

Chapel: A private chapel may be no bigger than a guest room, but a chapel that can accommodate all the household members can take up a space half the size of the great hall. If the vaulted ceiling is high enough, a balcony can connect the chapel to an anteroom on the second floor, allowing the lord and lady to attend services while the common folk worship on the nave's main floor. The chapel can be part of the keep or a building added to the side of the keep as a separate wing. A large chapel may contain a sacristy, a small study, and the chaplain's personal quarters.

Commoners' halls: Guard rooms are located near the top of the keep and beside its main entrance, in each tower, near prisons, and in the gatehouse. The soldiers' mess hall may be in the gatehouse or in one of the main towers. The servants' hall adjoins the commoners' kitchen or the servants' quarters. Other common areas are the administrative offices found in the castle of a powerful ruler.

These rooms can be as large as 50 square feet plus 20 square feet per person. For example, a small guard room furnished with a coal brazier intended to warm three watchmen would require no more than 110 square feet. A mess hall needs over 650 square feet to seat 30 troops at a meal.

Utility rooms

Kitchen: There should be a kitchen near the great hall, inside the keep. A larger castle may need another kitchen near the soldiers' and servants' quarters. The latter can be a separate building against the castle's inside wall. A kitchen usually has an adjoining scullery.

The size needed for the cook and his assistants comes to 150 square feet plus another square foot per person served. If the cook in the keep prepares meals for 10 people each day, the kitchen should take up 160 square feet. A soldier's kitchen for a garrison of 100 troops, however, would need 250 square feet.

The areas given here include space for an open hearth, a large table, some furniture, shelves, and a sink (serviced by a lead pipe connected to a cistern located near the top of the castle walls). If separate from the keep, the kitchen building may be made of stone or wood. The second floor is used for storage, or as a dwelling for the cook and his family. Sometimes the cooks sleep in the kitchen, on straw mats or benches.

Blacksmith: With all these soldiers, you'll need a smithy! This can be a very busy place, between production and repair of

implements of war and the care of horses. The smithy is always adjacent to the stable, along the inside of the castle walls.

The size of this workshop reaches 150 square feet plus five square feet per soldier. This includes enough space for a furnace, bellows, anvils, working surfaces, tool racks, etc. For a garrison of a hundred troops, the blacksmith and his assistants will need 650 square feet for their workshop. The upper floor of the building can be used as a dwelling for the blacksmith and his family.

Storage areas

Armory: This is where extra armor and weapons are stored and sometimes repaired. The armory can be inside the gatehouse or the keep, and takes up an area equivalent to a third of the blacksmith's workshop.

Buttery: This room is located near the great hall in the keep. Here, servants prepare beverages and fill jugs of beer or wine before bringing them to the great hall. The buttery is about a third the size of the great hall's kitchen. It may have a sink with running water from a cistern.

Cellar: Castles are expected to protect their inhabitants, sometimes for long periods of time, so the lord stockpiles large amounts of supplies against famine or siege (sometimes enough for an entire year). The cool cellar is used to store perishable foods, like salted meat and fish, cheese, honey, dried fruits (figs, nuts, etc.), and barrels of ale and wine. To insure a supply of fresh meat, livestock is corralled into the castle's bailey before a siege.

Food stored in the cellar supplements the soldiers' common diet of bread and water, or more likely, the meals of the lord and his guests. The cellar, located under the keep, needs about 40 cubic feet per person for a six-month supply. For example, a castle with 150 inhabitants (people of status, soldiers, and servants) would need a cellar of about 6,000 cubic feet (a room 20'x30'x10').

Granary: Sections of towers or attics (or any dry area) can be filled with sacks of grain and flour. Again, the more people staying in the castle, the greater the food supplies. For example, a six-month supply requires 20 cubic feet of storage per person (eight 20-pound sacks of flour per person). To establish granary size, count all people living at the castle, including soldiers, servants, gentry, and guests. A small castle with 150 people would need a storage facility of 3,000 cubic feet (a room 10'x10'x30').

Pantry: This room stores bread, tableware, linen, and other items that might be needed to serve meals in the adjacent great hall. The pantry is about half the size of the great hall's kitchen. Some castles also have a separate larder near the pantry, where game is left to hang instead of in the cellar.

Stable: This building is likely be made of wood, with its fourth side formed by castle's inner wall. Horses are stabled on the ground floor; the upper level is hay storage. The stable requires 100 square feet per horse, including stalls, mangers, alleyways, racks, etc.

Storehouse: This small wooden lean-to outside the keep is where household tools and other items are kept. It can also be used as a repair shop for household objects. The storehouse is about half the size of the smithy.

Other design concerns

Other areas of the castle not covered here should conform to the castle's overall design. The room that houses the portcullis and drawbridge mechanisms, for example, must be as wide as the castle's main entrance. The number of dungeons depends on the personal style of the builder, but prisons and guard rooms are normally located under one of the towers. Certain parts of the castle may have individual portcullises, separate baileys, or concentric walls. Battlements may be open to the air or, as with later castles, enclosed under roofs.

The castle may also have small gardens (for the lady's comfort or to grow food), an orchard, a fishpond, a mill, livestock pens, kennels, and a mews for the lord's falcons. Jousting usually takes place outside the castle.

Think about the original purpose of the stronghold. What strategic element is it defending (road, bridge, mountain pass, port, or town)? How does this purpose affect the stronghold's position and layout? If the castle is near a river, it can have docks. Castles usually follow the shape of the terrain upon which they are built, using rocky formations to the best advantage. Cliffs and steep rocky crags can be used just as effectively as moats. If the castle is located in the middle of a town, it may need extra walls and towers to protect it. Part of the town can be enclosed in the citadel also, with the townspeople providing necessary troop levies to man the battlements. Use your imagination and try to come up with unusual layouts and setups that will make your castles distinctive.

Remember, too, that you're designing a castle for a fantasy world. Think about the particular inhabitants of the D&D game. The lord of the castle might also be a cleric, a wizard, or a monster! A wizard needs a laboratory, a library, and perhaps even an observation point high up in a tower, for astronomy. A scriptorium might be useful for a cleric. And who knows what a monster might demand?

Design details

Hallways and stairs: Remember to create the hallways, corridors, and stairways allowing everyone to go about their business without entering someone else's pri-

vate quarters. Simple screens, curtains, or wooden panels rather than thick stone walls can separate hallways from main rooms, or subdivide a large chamber into smaller quarters. Corridors, stairways, and secret passages can be built within the thickness of the castle's outer walls, sometimes even within those of the keep. Extra stairs can be added inside smaller turrets corbelled alongside the walls of a keep, to allow private access to one or more rooms. Think about how the inhabitants of the keep can get around without disturbing each other, and how defenders can move quickly and safely to defend the stronghold.

To these mundane considerations, you should add features that take advantage of the fantasy element of the D&D game. *Teleport* areas, shifting walls, and magical doors add flavor to an otherwise humdrum castle.

Sanitation: Trivial and yet unavoidable, garderobes (latrines) have to be positioned so they either drain into the moat or into an underground cesspool. Garderobes can be inside the keep, in the towers, on the battlements (a simple turret corbelled within machicolation, hanging over the moat), or near military barracks and serveries. Rainwater can be channeled through the garderobes' drain pipes and into the moat.

One garderobe per 20 people is customary for the commoners (several garderobes can be clustered in the same chamber). In addition to the ubiquitous chamberpots, one garderobe per five people is more acceptable for the lord's family and the guests (usually, one near the great hall and another near the lord's living quarters). If a cesspool is needed, keep it away from kitchen and food storage areas. Cesspools also require some access so they can be regularly cleaned. Of course, fantasy peoples might rely on a *charmed* black pudding for sanitation!

Cisterns and wells: Water is essential to castle survival. One well should be located in the bailey, for everyone's access. A second well can be placed inside the keep, with a single vertical shaft connecting with all upper floors. If there is no indoor well, servants must be sent to fetch water from the courtyard.

Should the well fail, cisterns become critical. These holding vats are usually positioned high up near the top of the walls, where runoff from rainfall can be collected. Cistern water can then be channeled to butteries, kitchens, sculleries, and even to actual washrooms in more "modern" royal castles. Near the entrance of the great hall, consider placing a small basin recessed in a wall. Equip it with a drain pipe and a metal faucet to release cistern water. Contrary to most beliefs, late medieval plumbing compared favorably to that of 17th-century Versailles. And of course, the inhabitants of your D&D

world have magic, too!

A 30-cubic-foot cistern can hold about 250 gallons of water. In a temperate climate, a physically active person (especially one who works outdoors) needs up to three quarts of water a day. That cistern can thus serve 100 people for three days before drying up completely. Several cisterns and reasonable rainfall should see your castle's population through until a new well can be dug to replace one that has failed.

A castle near a river can sometimes rely on an underground conduit to channel water to the castle. Secrecy is of the essence here, to prevent enemies from discovering the conduit and cutting off the castle's water supply during a siege. The single most precious magical asset in siege warfare is probably a magical source of water or a lot of clerics.

Fireplaces: Early castles have no fireplaces. Instead, the inhabitants most likely use coal braziers. These castles are cold, drafty places. They have no glass windows, relying instead on wooden shutters and tapestries. If the great hall is on the ground floor, it can safely have an open hearth. Smoke rises to the ceiling and exits through a roof vent.

When it became customary to locate the great hall and private quarters on the upper floors, chimneys became a necessity. In these castles, fires cannot be lit directly on the floor (which is made of timber) but require stone-walled fireplaces with permanent chimneys.

A castle with fireplaces will often also have thick greenish glass in the windows. Castles of the later medieval period may have stained glass or glazed windows.

In the D&D game, judicious use of *control temperature 10' radius* spells or magical devices can also heat a fantasy castle.

Machiavellian measures: There are many ways to make the lives of castle intruders very difficult, especially for inventive dungeon designers. The best protection makes use of separate portcullises, strategically placed murder-holes (arrow slits), and machicolations through which to pour boiling oil or pitch. Don't leave any blind spots around the castle when positioning towers. Try to create bottlenecks to force attackers through before they reach the keep entrance. Invaders trapped in such narrow areas are easy pickings for crossfire from strategically placed archers. Spiral stairs should rise clockwise, so the center post gets in the way of an attacker's sword (assuming he's right-handed). Use trap doors to drop victims into *oubliettes* (remote dungeon cells where victims are "forgotten") or worse, into monster-infested pits. Think about the location of the chute if it goes through several floors. Now is the time to use magical spells and some of the tricks and traps in the D&D game to leave in the way of attackers.

Servants

As described in the *Rules Cyclopedias*, many people dwell in a castle. There were often many more servants in the castle than the people they served. Peasant servants take care of the menial tasks, but they do not live at the castle. Their service is temporary. Household servants must be paid, fed, and given shelter. Here's a way to find out how many servants there should be. If this method provides fewer servants than those listed in the *Rules Cyclopedias*, assume that some servants perform several different functions.

First, find out how many people of status live in the castle (the lord and lady, their children, castle officials, guests, etc.). Then multiply that total by three for a king or a duke, or by two for a marquis or a count. Use the number as is for a baron, or divide it by two (rounding up) for a simple knight in a manor house. The result gives a rough total of the servants attending to the needs of lord and his guests throughout the castle.

Decide how many soldiers make up the castle's garrison. Divide the number of soldiers by 20 (rounding up). This gives the number of people needed for the smithy's forge and stable. Now add up all the inhabitants so far. Divide that total by 20 (rounding up) to find out how many more people work in kitchens.

For example: Let's assume we have 10 people of status in a baron's keep, plus three children, and a garrison of 100 troops. The baron would require 13 servants. The stable and smithy require five more people ($100/20=5$). That gives us 131 people so far. The kitchens need an additional seven people ($131/20=6$). Of these, it would be safe to assume at least two work in the baron's kitchen, and the other five in the commoners' kitchen. The grand total of people living at the castle now comes to 138.

The salary noted in the *Rules Cyclopedias* for servants is *far* too high (5 gp a month plus room and board). A single piece of silver should be more than enough, in most cases, for common domestic servants. Fortunately, that's not a concern if using the "cost overhead" system (see "Known World Grimoire," DRAGON® Magazine, issue #191). Servants are normally part of the dominion ruler's normal cost overhead.

How the place looks

Motte-and-bailey strongholds are constructed of timber and earth. Later castles, constructed almost entirely of stone, are whitewashed inside and out. The inside of the keep can be plastered or covered with wooden panels. The lord's dwelling areas might feature painted decorations on the walls, displaying flowers, busts of kings and queens, heraldic arms, fantastic animals, medieval world maps, etc. Tapestries of wool or silk are also very

common, and square banners can be hung from the ceiling of the great hall.

Straw covers the floor, often concealing old food remains and other debris. Occasionally, the soiled straw and refuse are swept away, and fresh straw with fragrant herbs is brought in. Unlike oriental abodes, carpets aren't used as floor coverings in European medieval fortresses. The floor at ground level may be hardened earth or stone, while upper floors are almost invariably made of timber supported by wooden pillars or stone vaults.

Light comes from candles, rushlights, and oil lamps. Wall brackets, iron candelabra, and table candlesticks hold candles or rushlights, and large oil lamps can be hung from the ceilings or mounted on stands. Of course, in the D&D game, one might find *permanent light* spells far more effective and safer to use.

Sieges

Aside from being symbols of local authority, castles are a critical factor in the medieval military and political equation. Close to 90% of historical battles involved a besieged fortified town or stronghold. Castellans appointed to administer a castle in the name of their proprietors may abuse their vested powers over the surrounding lands. They may betray their lieges in favor of rivals in hopes of gaining nobility and ownership of their castles and surrounding lands. Dominion rulers, beware!

Strongholds are generally defensive. Few troops can hold out for a very long time against large armies, sometimes at odds worse than 10:1. If a castle can hold out long enough, it is then the besiegers who face a major logistical problem. There are many more of them to feed, and they do not benefit from a stronghold's protection against weather, disease, and relief forces coming to help the besieged castle.

Attackers cannot ignore castles and bypass them, because then the castle garrisons can cut the attackers' supply lines. So in most wars, castles must be dealt with before moving on, usually at great cost to the attacker. A strong dislike of pitched battles between two forces in an open area persisted among medieval commanders because of the likelihood of high casualties on both sides. In contrast to this, siege warfare was considerably more bearable, which also explains why strongholds were built. The key factors of siege warfare lie in the supply of money, equipment, provisions, and time, rather than a brutal, bloody confrontation. If the castle runs out of water or supplies, its garrison can always surrender with the hope of being spared.

One problem came up in the *Rules Cyclopedias*, however, about the way strongholds can be breached. In truth, it isn't necessary to inflict the whole amount of a structure's hit points to breach it. If you are not using

the abstract Siege Machine rules, here's a suggestion on how to handle breaches.

To create a 10'-wide breach, divide the structure's hp value by its frontage. If it's a building (keep, gatehouse, etc.), use that number directly. If it's a two-dimensional structure (such as a wall), multiply by 4.

Example A: A 60'-wide keep has 2,500 hp. $2,500/60=42$. A breach requires only 42 points of damage applied to the same general area of the keep.

Example B: A 100'-long wall section has 500 hp. A breach requires $(500/100)\times 4=20$ points of damage.

More damage must be inflicted on thicker structures to create a breach. The numbers given above are for 5'-thick structures. For a 10'-thick structure, multiply the required hit points by 2; for a 15' structure, multiply by 3; for a 20' structure times 4, etc. So in example B, above, breaching a 10'-thick wall requires 40 hp instead of 20 hp.

Field repair: Defenders get to repair their walls at the rate of 1 hp per person per day. Repair crews cannot participate in the defense of their stronghold, however. No more than 30 people can work on the same breach simultaneously. Damage to structures cannot be reduced by more than 75%. Field repair is free but temporary. When normal repair takes place after the conflict, the breach must be repaired from scratch, at full cost.

All this being said, you now should be able to build your own castle with a bit more flavor and realism, and then, of course, seize those of your foes with equal know-how!

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CHRIS HARVEY GAMES

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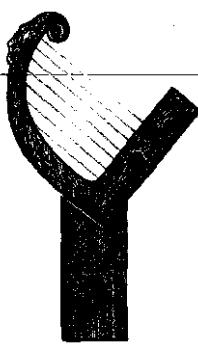
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our problem, Bainnor Ulprut," the Adon said after ordering a round of dark ale, "is you play everything right but nothing comes out right."

He sounded like my instructors at Kermonde. Through seven years training at the bardic college, I repeatedly heard the same from them. "All technique and no style," they would say.

In the spring of my twentieth year, I set out from Kermonde to follow my muse, from city to town to manor to freehold, and while I was seldom paid in over-ripe fruit, I was more seldom paid in coin. By autumn, I had hocked all my instruments but a dilapidated box-harp with which I sang for my supper.

Then I met Gurnak Alkumdura and his friend, Gibban of Elmford. Little could I guess where a chance meeting and a mug of ale would take me.

They approached me one evening in Colum where they heard my telling of "The Blaze of Nosmir."

Gibban was lean and quick, a small man several years older than myself, whose sandy-haired crown barely reached my chin. He had restless eyes that refused to light for long in one spot, and the long, skillful fingers of an artist. He was a professional gambler, and there was nothing soft about him. There was an edge to him as sharp and dangerous as the daggers he carried. He spoke little, but I later came to know him as a man of unimpeachable integrity. His profession demanded it; who would gamble with a man they could not trust?

Dura, an Adon freesword, was shorter than his companion but weighed half again as much. The Adon race is typically of such stature, I knew from my studies, but I'd never before met one, as they dwell in the mountains far to the west of the Realm of the Twin Throne. He was all steel tendon and iron sinew from a lifetime of soldiering, and possessed an open, affable nature that belied his lethal profession.

"Where's the spark?" he continued. "The feeling? How can you sing of love, growing up cloistered at Kermonde? How can you sing of battle when you've never felt the shock of steel meeting steel? What you need is to experience a bit of the world you would sing of." He looked at me slyly. "Coincidentally, I'm guard captain for a merchant caravan heading for the coast, and I'm hiring."

I smiled and shook my head.

"You're talking to the wrong man. I have no skill with weapons and don't even own a sword."

"With your size," he said looking up at me, deadpan, "all you'll have to do is snarl."

I hired on, more convinced by the prospect of a steady income than the experience Dura suggested. He immediately began training me in my new job, loaning me a broadsword and working with me each day as we traveled. I soon became comfortable with the blade, and gradually I began to feel like the fighter I pretended to be.

"And you insist you've never studied the sword?" demanded Dura after our workout one day.

"Students at Kermonde exercise with wooden swords," I replied, "but that's all. I held my own but I think it was due more to my size and the quality of my opponents than any skill on my part."

"Well, you're wrong," Dura declared. "You're a natural. In these past few weeks, you've learned what should take the better part of a year."

As the caravan moved throughout the East, I decided that Dura was wiser than I had suspected, for I was also learning more about my own craft, lessons not taught at Kermonde. I began to sense the source of inspiration behind the stories of pre-Empire heroes, to feel the rhythm of the old war chants

Bainnor's Last Ballad

By Ralph W. Bundy

Illustrations by Bob Klasnick

in the repetition of the heavy blade's slash and return. I knew I could reproduce with the pipe and drone the fierce joy of combat and the bone-deep weariness of too much marching and too little sleep.

Just what I needed after all, I thought.

The town of Andook lies in the hills south of the mountain known as Roduk, which sprawls heavily across the edge of Forest Drocer near the eastern sea. There have men set their hearths, defying the dangers of the deep forest and the Dark Ones, the Kyuarch, who dwell deep within Roduk.

We arrived in Andook with the early snows of winter. Gibban, Dura, and I, our pouches full, decided the winter was no time for traveling. So we left the caravan, took rooms at the inn and settled in to wait out the snows—Gibban running a continual dice game, myself practicing and performing with my box-harp, and Dura each night regaling any who listened with improbable stories of life as a freesword.

The weeks passed quickly. It was three days before the mid-winter festival, and a storm had been blowing for the past two. We were at our usual place at the inn late that morning when a young woman, hardly more than a girl, burst in. The snow gusted across the room as the door was caught by the wind and slammed open. She stood there for a moment, looking for all the world like a MontDamon Snowbeast, then collapsed in a heap of fur and rapidly melting snow. A cup of strong spirits quickly revived her. She told us her name was Darial, and she came from the nearby hamlet of Alwayd's Farm. She had struggled for a day and a half through the storm to warn Andook.

The morning the storm hit, Alwayd had been attacked. Swarms of Kyuarch savages appeared out of the dawn, their approach concealed by the storm. She was outside the village searching for a strayed cow and returned in time to see, from safe shelter, the last house in the village fall to the Kyuarch assault. The survivors were dragged to a goat pen at the edge of town. Among them Darial glimpsed her mother and younger brother.

Frightened and unarmed, she lurked in the shelter of burning buildings and snow-covered bushes throughout the day. Before dark the Kyuarch left, herding their captives and stolen livestock before them. Fighting fear and cold, Darial followed them until they disappeared into a cave on MontRoduk. Then, losing hope, she set out for Andook.

Now Andook is itself no city but with 400 residents—men, women and children—it is the largest village in the area. It is a trading center and a place of refuge during times of unrest, with a Royal Guard compound at the village center. A single structure stands within the compound, occupied by the Royal Constable and two Royal Guardsmen. The constable leads the volunteer militia and is responsible for keeping the peace in Andook and the surrounding hamlets.

We sent for Hortsoc Bowman, the constable, who called a meeting of the village council and militia, summoning them to the inn. Soon, it seemed the entire village was gathered there.

Bowman knew the militia would be little help. They were forty young men and women who trained once a month and sometimes chased down bandits or small bands of Kyuarch raiders. He knew what needed to be done.

"We have no Crystal Speaker who can summon aid from the Guard at Enatorj, and we are too few to stand and fight. We must go to them—plug the tunnels with their dead. In the open, we can never stop them," he said.

"We must defend our town," cried the mayor of Andook.

"We will no more be able to withstand them than Alwayd's Farm could. We must go to MontRoduk and hold them in their tunnels."

"We must send to Enatorj for the Royal Guard," cried the senior councilman.

"No time. We must hold them in their tunnels."

"We must flee, to the stout walls of Enatorj."

"We will hold them in their tunnels."

In a furious quarter hour Bowman dispatched a rider to Enatorj for the Guard, while other riders were sent to warn each of the six neighboring hamlets. All civilians who could not fight were loaded into wagons and sent off toward Enatorj under guard. Ten more militia were detailed to escort the refugees from the hamlets when they arrived.

Bowman addressed the remaining sixty villagers and thirteen militia.

"I shall take the remaining militia to MontRoduk and hold the Kyuarch in their tunnels," he told the mayor.

"But Constable," protested the mayor, "you take all the most experienced warriors with you, leaving us with naught. Pray, leave us some defense for the village should the Kyuarch get by you."

The constable considered this and replied, "There are those among the militia who are not capable of a hard ride, then fighting immediately thereafter. Torran, who has been ill, shall stay and also Padis, who is too fond of his food. Gorak Half-foot and One-armed Pank are both valiant, but may serve better here than there. I shall take the remaining militia and hold the Kyuarch in their tunnels."

"But Constable," protested the senior councilman, "you leave us with but four militia, each lame or ill. Pray, leave us some who can not only command the walls, but rally the defenders should the corporals fall."

The constable considered this and replied, "There are four women in my troop, and women captured by the Dark Ones do not fare well. I shall leave you Anyon, Inyocene, Etalie, and Turehsede. I shall take the remaining militia to hold the Kyuarch in their tunnels."

"But Constable," protested a junior councilman, "you leave us with but eight militia, half of them lame or ill. Pray, leave us some who can not only guide the defense and rally the defenders, but who can lead a strike against the raiders when they are turned back."

The constable considered this and replied, "To leave more may be to condemn those I take. I leave it to those of the militia who remain: Shall you come with me to the Dark Ones' tunnels, or stay as the councilman asks?"

The five remaining militia considered, but finally replied, "We are loath to see you leave to your certain death, but this is our village. If we are to die, we would rather it be with our friends and families than in the dark of the Kyuarch holes."

The noble Hortsoc Bowman replied, "Stay then, with the gods' blessings. I swore an oath to defend this district as I saw best. Guard Corporal Prilg, Guardsman Rishi, and I shall go to MontRoduk and attempt to hold the Kyuarch in their tunnels. Our oath demands no less."

Gurnak Alkumdura, hearing this, laughed.

"Why do you laugh, Adon?" asked the constable.

"No offense to your honor, milord constable, but your oath will not defend this town. I imagine you and your Brightworld men stumbling about in the Darkworld, fighting those who live their entire lives there. Have you ever fought the Kyuarch in their own tunnels?"

"I know of those who have, and they agree that lacking forces to face them in the open, the only way to stop them is holding them below ground."

"In truth, it is the best way, but knowing it and doing it are altogether different. There's no helping it, I suppose, but for me to go and show you how it is done."

The constable looked surprised.

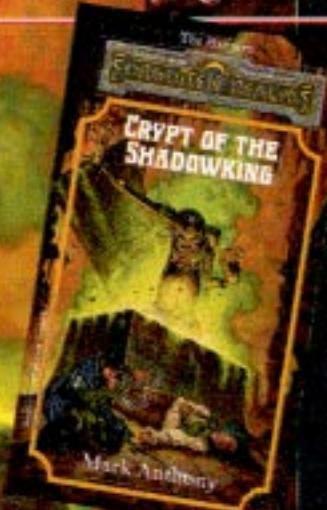
"You understand I can neither command, nor hire, your services."

"I am an Adon freesword," answered Dura proudly, "and

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when not oathbound otherwise, I fight when and where I please. Adon have fought Kyuarch since before humans ever knew this land. I require no pay to fight them again."

"One minute!" growled Gibban. "Have you forgotten you still owe me fourteen silver pennies from our last dicing? How will I collect if you go off and get killed under Roduk with these oath-bound, oath-doomed soldiers?" he asked of Alkumdura.

"That will be my good fortune then, to save fourteen silver pennies," answered the Adon.

"Nay, you'll not renege on your debt so easily. If you go I shall also go, to protect my investment."

The constable turned to me.

"And what of you, tunesmith? You have no stake in this matter and may flee with the rest or stay in the village."

I looked at those who were going to the mountain. Gibban wore his gambler's face, impassive, but I recognised his deep commitment to his friend. Dura looked at ease, even eager for the battle. Bowman and Corporal Prilg seemed confident and professional, while Guardsman Rishi, younger even than myself, looked frightened but determined. If they were disappointed at the failure of the village to support them, they did not show it.

"I am no warrior. I am no more than competent with the sword. But like these good people of the militia, if I am to die in this war I would rather die with my friends. Besides, should I not die, there may be a great tale to be spun from this. I shall go to MontRoduk."

The constable looked at the volunteers. "Six of us, then. We leave in one hour."

"Seven." A quiet voice spoke behind us. The girl, Darial, stepped up to stand with us.

The constable shook his head. "I would not risk a woman to capture by the Kyuarch. You leave with the wagons, or stay here and join in the town defense if you like. You've done enough by warning us; you need do no more."

Darial would not be turned away.

"I'll not be captured—killed perhaps, but not captured. And you need me. I know where the Dark Ones have gone. I can lead you straight to their hole. Please, milord, I have family carried off who need my help."

"You are in no condition to make the trip. Rishi is a tracker. We can find the hole ourselves."

"In the storm? On the slopes of Roduk? The time you will lose searching may cost me family. I am a tracker, as was my father, and I can use a sling and spear. I ride with you."

Recognizing there was no dissuading her, Bowman looked over the assembled villagers. Spotting the man he sought, he called him over.

"Incolbaw! Have you something to help the girl?"

A tall, gaunt man shuffled out of the crowd. He wore the long white robe of a witch, with its many pockets and pouches for the myriad ingredients and powders required by his profession.

"Yes, Constable, I believe I do." He turned to the crowd. "Someone fetch me a drink. Something hot."

Shortly, someone held a cup of mulled wine out to him. He did not take it, but instead tore open a small paper packet, emptying the powder it contained into the steaming beverage. Stirring with his forefinger, he mixed the powder and wine, then nodded toward the girl.

"Give it to her," he ordered.

Darial took the drink, looked at the the witch, and drank, draining the cup.

"Catch her," the witch cautioned.

Darial gave him a quizzical look, half smiled as at a joke she did not understand, and collapsed.

Incolbaw laughed as we gaped at the fallen girl.

"Fear not," he said, "it is but a simple restorative. A half

hour of sleep and she'll be ready to travel. Be warned, however. This is not magic but a natural potion, a drug. She will eventually require true rest, and when her fatigue sets in again it will hit hard, with little warning."

"She will go with us, then, to guide us through the forest," said Bowman. "Find her some weapons and a horse. We ride for MontRoduk in one hour. Go, then, and prepare," said the constable, and we did.

We gathered before the inn for our final preparations.

With chain mail and helms and swords issued by the Royal Armory, the constable and guardsmen had the military look. Hortsoc Bowman also carried the great bow for which he was known, and the guardsmen each carried four javelins. The volunteers were more diverse. Dura wore plated chain on his thick, squat frame and carried a double-strung crossbow and iron-shod cudgel. Gibban carried a horseman's bow and a brace of eighteen-inch daggers, and was armored with only a simple cuirass of hardened leather. Someone had given Darial a half-rusted chain shirt to wear over her heavy coat, and an antique helm of brass and leather, and she was armed with a sling and a short spear. I had only a leather cuirass with chain collar and sleeves, and Dura's broadsword. This was, I felt, entirely inadequate. My box-harp was slung across my back under my cloak, buckled into its leather wrap. It was my livelihood, and I was not inclined to leave it behind.

As we mounted up, Incolbaw approached us and handed each of us a small bottle.

"Here, take these draughts. These are not like the powder I gave the girl—these have true power, the strongest healing I know."

Taking the proffered bottle, I saw that the hand that offered it lacked a thumb.

"That fool mayor sent me to fetch these for him and the council. Ha! I made the potions. I'll put them where they'll do the most good."

"You will anger the mayor," stated the constable.

The witch shook his head. "I've not always concocted potions," he said, holding up before him thumbless hands. "I was punished by men, but the gods decreed a change in my life. I must do what good I can. If the Dark Ones reach here, these potions will be wasted. We all will die. Take them and carry the fight to the Dark Ones' hole. Convince the Kyuarch to remain in the Darkworld. You are our best hope for survival."

Bowman nodded, saluted Incolbaw, and led the volunteers out the gate.

Snow fell lightly, but the storm had blown itself out and travel was easy. Forsaking the roads for the straighter path, Darial led us directly toward the mountain. As we rode, we discussed the enemy. Dura did most of the talking.

"You can still change your minds," he cautioned us. "What will you do should I perish this day at the end of a Kyuarch spear? There are many ways to die in the Darkworld even should you survive the Kyuarch."

"We know this, freesword," said the constable.

"Then I shall tell you what I can of the Darkworld," said Dura. "First, time flows differently in the Dark. Hours may slip by while minutes stretch out forever. Make no plans founded on the passage of time. 'Back in five minutes' means nothing in the Dark."

The Adon paused, making sure we understood his warning.

"The enemy. Kyuarch are hirsute beasts, covered with gray or dirty-white fur, including their faces."

"Then why are they called 'Dark Ones'?" I asked.

"They come from the Darkworld," said Gibban, with a tone he might use with a particularly slow child. I shut up. Dura continued as if he hadn't heard us.

"There are seldom more than two hundred Kyuarch in a

nest. More, and they start killing each other. But there may be more than one nest in a cavern system. Half the Kyuarch in a nest will be adult males, warriors. The rest will be females and pups that should be no threat if you carry a torch. They seldom leave their nests, and never see any light brighter than their small oil lamps. Anything more blinds them. In darkness, however . . . They keep too many Brightworld slaves to be awed by Brightworlders. They know you are helpless in the Dark. Whatever you do, do not lose your lights. Never lose your lights."

Four hours out, our path led us through Leyda's Rest. The village was burned, desolated. Bowman's messenger lay dead at the village center with the men of the village. Darial begged us not to stop to bury them and Bowman agreed; the needs of the living were greater than those of the dead. After a quick appeal to the gods, we rode on, leaving the lifeless village to the wind and snow.

A trail, only partially obscured by the fresh snow, led away from the village, heading across country in the direction we rode. It was recent, made by many women and children, some livestock, and a farm wagon drawn by two horses, all escorted by a dozen or so Kyuarch. We hurried down the trail, praying we might catch the Dark Ones and their victims before they arrived at their hole. And so it was.

They were not expecting us. The Kyuarch were all afoot but for one riding on the wagon beside a woman who handled the reins. The livestock was bunched together behind the wagon, herded by the captives, and the youngest children rode in the wagon. Five Kyuarch followed the captives and livestock, while four more marched on either side of the column. At the head of the column, before the wagon, marched three more, guiding the way.

The Kyuarch wore a wide mixture of mismatched armor. Most carried spears or great, heavy swords. They towered over their captives; not one stood less than six feet tall.

With no pre-arrangement, no plan, we set upon them.

I first saw here how Bowman earned his name. Bowman and Gibban each loosed an arrow, and Darial a stone, killing or wounding three of the five Kyuarch that marched at the rear. Even as they fell, as Gibban and Darial prepared to fire again, Bowman dropped the other two.

Dura fired both bolts from his crossbow, killing the Kyuarch on the wagon. As it fell, the woman driving yelled and cracked the reins. The horses bolted, trampling two of the Kyuarch before her and bowing the third over. The captives behind the wagon fell upon the sprawled Dark One, tearing it to pieces with their bare hands.

Gibban finished off the wounded Kyuarch at the rear of the column as the rest of us charged.

One raider began hewing at the women with its heavy sword. Darial urged her mule forward and thrust at the murderous Kyuarch with her spear. It saw her coming and turned, deflecting the thrust, then returned the strike with its heavy sword, splintering the spear. Before it could swing again, the raider was staggered by an arrow in its side. Darial leaped from her saddle, driving her dagger into the Kyuarch's throat. It hammered her to the ground with the pommel of its sword. She lay stunned as the fiend stepped toward her, sword raised. Then, with a look of baffled anger, it collapsed, finally realizing it was dead.

The other three raiders on the left were closing in on Darial when Dura and I charged, scattering them. One unhorsed Dura, thrusting a spear clean through Dura's mount. With agility belying his bulk, the Adon jumped free and struck at his attacker with his cudgel, crushing the Kyuarch's skull. With a second mighty blow he caved in another's chest. The third raider struck Dura on the left arm with a mace. Dura did not fall but stood stunned by the force of the hit.

I slashed at the Dark One from my horse, wounding its shoulder. The Kyuarch turned toward me now and struck my horse's leg, and I was thrown. The raider leaped toward me. Shaking off the effects of his injury, Dura smashed the Kyuarch across its back, shattering its spine. As the Dark One fell, it drew a dagger from its belt, using the blade to drag itself toward me. Snarling and spitting, it approached as fast as I could crab-walk back from it. Dura finished it with a blow to the head.

I regained my feet in time to see the constable and Rishi standing before the bodies of three Kyuarch. Corporal Prilg lay between them. The last remaining raider was backing away. It turned and ran. It did not get a dozen yards before it was hit by a javelin, from Rishi, and an arrow, from Gibban. Staggered, it fell to one knee. As it tried to rise, it was hit twice more. It fell and did not get up again.

The survivors from Leyda's Rest swarmed about us, some crying, some laughing, others mute with shock. Of them all only Soma, the wagon driver, a heavy, white-haired matron, seemed to be in complete control of herself. She quickly organized the villagers, tending to wounded companions, comforting the distraught, calming the hysterical.

Corporal Prilg was in bad shape. Opening one of the witch's precious potions, the constable urged the semi-conscious guardsman to drink. Prilg gagged as the bitter draught passed his lips, then he convulsively swallowed.

"Will that really help him?" asked Darial.

"If it doesn't, I'll demand our money back," said Bowman wryly.

"How long will it take?"

"As long as it must. We'll see."

Rishi and Gibban threw up a lean-to shelter for Prilg and the injured women, stretching horse blankets between two poles, then flooring it with pine branches laid over the snow. Darial, accustomed to the occasional unpleasantries of farm life, had the task of putting my poor horse out of its misery—a job I couldn't do myself, not when there was another to relieve me of it. I busied myself with seeing to Dura's injury.

Dura's arm was broken, but he laughed when I suggested that he use his potion.

"If you think that this is the worst I'll get from the Dark Ones this day, you greatly underestimate the enemy. Come, Bainnor, wrap my arm with splints and bind it to my side. I don't need my left hand to swing my weapon, and I don't doubt that I'll more need my healing draught later."

I did as I was bid and then, overwhelmed by the carnage and feeling a need to do something normal, I unslung my box-harp, checking it over carefully. Satisfied that it had survived the fall from my horse, I began to re-wrap it.

Darial stopped me.

"Could you play something?" she asked wistfully, reminding me that this tough, driven child was so recently just another young farm girl.

I demurred, citing the danger of Kyuarch patrols, but Soma added her plea as well, for the sake of the frightened children. Bowman assented.

"The snow will muffle the sound. Any Kyuarch around would likely see us before hearing us. Go ahead, play."

There was no doubt in my mind of what to play. I told the tale of Berdon and Padride who, when denied permission to marry, fled into the snowbound forest and became separated and lost. They finally found each other in the warmth of eternal spring after perishing in the snow. A song of love and loss and redemption; a song for winter and death and brave hopes.

As I was strapping my box-harp back into its wrap, Soma approached me.

"You saved us from slavery and death. We cannot fully repay you," she said. "Take this. It may help."

She held out a small bronze amulet on a light chain. It was a common charm such as village sorcerers sold at fairs. Set in one face was a pale green stone; the obverse was covered with finely etched writing I didn't recognize.

"It will enhance your natural talent, show you the true path of your life."

"I thank you, grandmother, but why offer this to me? I am not the leader of this band."

"You are the one whom it may benefit, the one who still seeks his way. Take it. And keep hope. Help will come."

She turned away and walked back to her villagers. I shrugged, slipped the chain over my head, and tucked the gift into my shirt with the thought that it might be worth a meal. I finished wrapping my box-harp, then went to check on Prilg as Soma and the villagers headed back toward Leyda's Rest.

Incoblaw had not exaggerated the power of his healing draught. Prilg's wounds had begun to close before I finished binding Dura's arm, and were completely healed by the time I finished the ballad. When I looked in on him, he was ready to go.

Rishi and Darial, re-armed with a Kyuarch spear, scouted the trail ahead of us. The villagers were barely out of sight when the trackers returned, reporting that the cave was only a short distance ahead. A number of wrecked and abandoned farm wagons and carts gave mute evidence of more captives brought in from other villages. There was no sign of anyone coming or going at the moment, nor even of any sentries.

"That's not their way," said the Adon. "There will be plenty of guards farther in, you can count on it."

The mouth of the cave was small, but inside it widened into a large chamber. A single tunnel led into the mountain from the cavern, easily large enough for the Dark Ones to guide their prisoners and stolen livestock down.

Rishi, Prilg, Darial, and I lit torches, but the others preferred to use our light and keep both hands free. We inched our way down into the cave with Dura in the lead. He carried no torch; his nonhuman eyes could pierce the dark as easily as those we sought, and his acute hearing would detect any foe before even he could see them. As we descended, Rishi and Darial examined a number of alcoves and side passages, but they were all unused.

Several hundred feet in, we came upon a second large chamber with three passages leading from it. At the far end lay a mound of crudely butchered livestock; half buried among the carcasses lay the body of an elderly woman. Darial shrieked and rushed across the room, sobbing as she dragged the body free of the pile.

"Hsssst! Quiet!" hissed Dura. "You want to tell them we're coming?"

"Her name is Malisandril," said Darial, not hearing him. "She lived next door. She was like a grandmother."

Dura lifted the girl to her feet.

"She's beyond hurt now. Come," he said gently, "we have work to do. Which way did the prisoners go?"

Darial knelt and hugged the old woman again, kissing her cheek, then stood.

"This way," said Rishi, pointing to a narrow passage on the left. "The prisoners, some goats and sheep, a few guards. Most of the Kyuarch went down the second tunnel."

Darial examined the entrance of the third tunnel, beyond the pile of offal. "This passage is used, but I don't recognise the tracks."

"Darial! Come away from there!" The Adon pulled her away. "I told you there are many ways to die in the Dark. Look at that," he said, turning her to look at the pile of carrion. "The Dark Ones slaughter the large animals here, those that are too big for the tunnels, and carry the meat to their nest, leav-

ing the carcasses for scavengers, probably calder. And that's the calder hole."

"Calder?"

"Big blind lizards. Kyuarch always keep them in their tunnels. Not too dangerous unless they catch you asleep or unconscious. But go into their hole . . . Well, do you want to pick a fight with a dozen ten-foot lizards?"

Darial shook her head and backed away from the tunnel.

"Hssst!" The Adon cocked an ear toward the first tunnel, then shrugged his crossbow off his shoulder and handed it to Darial.

"Here. Load this for me."

"But I . . ."

"Darial! In the Darkworld I lead. Follow my lead or return to the surface immediately."

Darial looked doubtfully at the heavy contraption.

"I can use it one handed, but it takes two hands to cock and load," he insisted, pressing it on her.

She followed his instructions, struggling briefly with the first string, then getting the feel of it and drawing the second easily. She offered the crossbow to Dura but he held up his hand, signaling for silence.

"I think we've been heard. We're going to be busy in a minute."

Dura trotted to the near tunnel, where the prisoners had been taken, and listened again. After a moment he nodded.

"They come."

Taking the crossbow from Darial, his club held tightly between his bound arm and his chest, he screamed an Adon war cry and charged down the tunnel into the darkness. Darial gave the old woman one last despairing look, then lowered her spear and charged after him, the rest of us hurrying behind as best we could.

We met and destroyed three small groups of sentries in our headlong race down the tunnel. Each time, the bows and javelins and Darial's sling made all the difference in the fighting. The Kyuarch used no missile weapons; their spears were used only in close combat and never thrown.

At the third large chamber, we found a dozen Kyuarch guarding threescore women and children. As we attacked with our arrows and missiles, the prisoners turned on their captors. We never had to close with the guards. They, along with several women and children, were dead before we reached them.

Dura called a halt. We had been running and fighting for some time, and all of us were tiring out, except Darial and Prilg, because of their potions, and Dura with his extraordinary strength. Despite the coolness of the cave I was sweating, and I could feel Soma's amulet lying warm against my skin. As we rested, we drew straws to see who would escort the freed captives to the surface. Rishi drew the short straw. The young soldier swore he would return as soon as his charges were safe, and led them up the tunnel.

Disappointed that none of the rescued were from Alwayd, Darial was anxious to push on, but Dura advised caution.

"We've been lucky so far, but from here on we must not expect this kind of success. The nest will open up from this one tunnel to a maze—if any of you are separated, you'll never find the tunnel back to the surface. When I call for a retreat, stay with me. We came down fast, but we have to go back slowly to make this work. The Dark Ones must believe there are more of us than they want to deal with. Otherwise, we all die."

At the next chamber we came upon more captives, but these poor souls would never again see the daylight. Beside some two-score chickens and a dozen goats hung the flayed and gutted bodies of a half-dozen murdered innocents. I could not tell their gender, only that they were not full grown.

In sickened, cold fury we attacked and killed the half-dozen

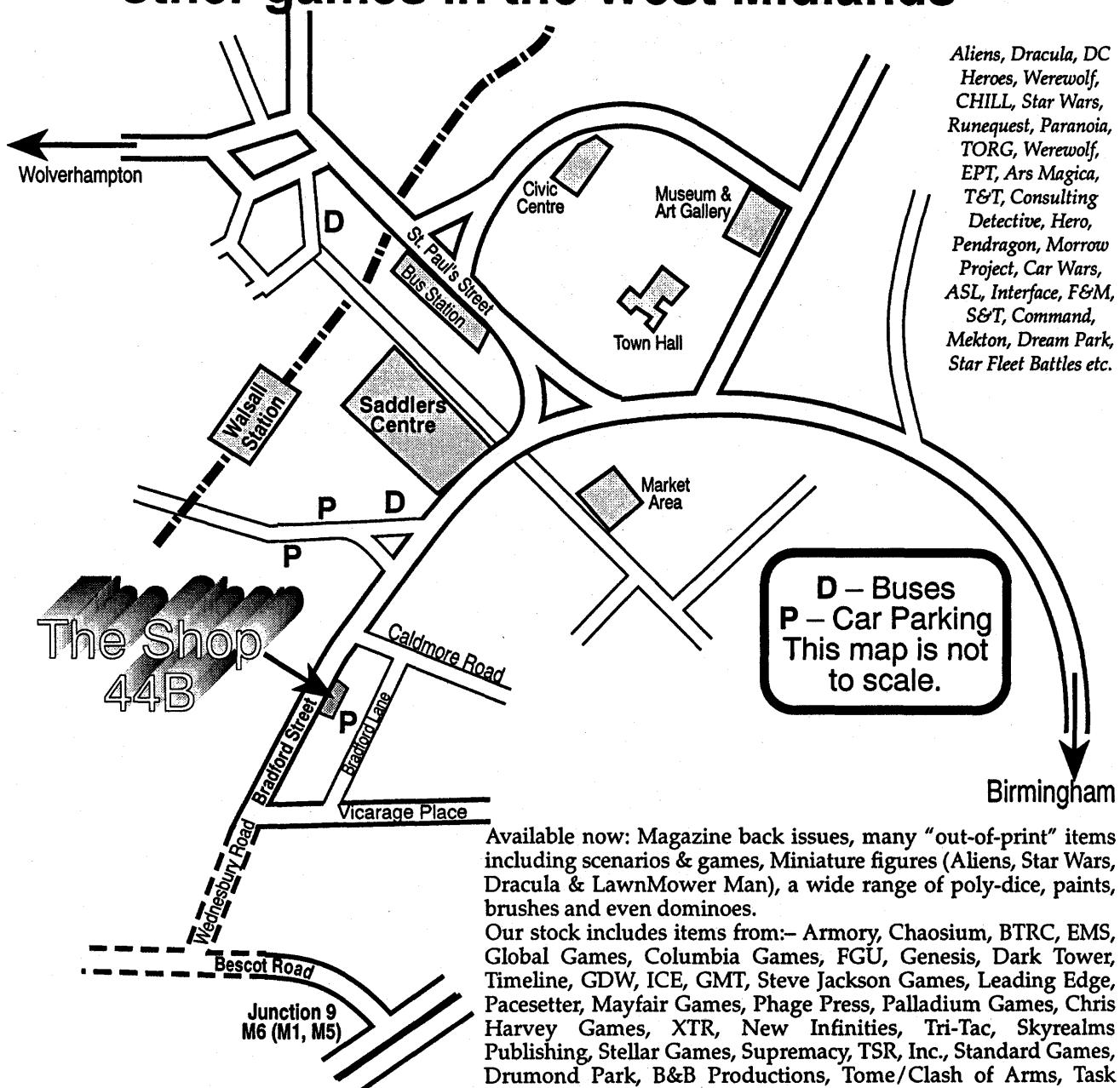
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butchers working in the slaughterhouse. Once finished with them, we discovered several of their females, blinded and helpless in the light of our torches. These we also dispatched.

Down the tunnel we abruptly came upon the heart of the nest. Rage fueled our strength as we fell upon the foe. We beat down all resistance that faced us. Wherever captives were held, all we had to do was bring light into the area to make the slaves rise against their Darkworld masters. Outnumbered and unarmed, they threw themselves upon the Kyuarch spears. They died by the score, but so did the Dark Ones.

As I fought, I realized Soma's amulet truly had the power she claimed. The amulet glowed warm beneath my shirt as every trick of survival in combat was burned into my memory. I was absolutely confident of my every move, countering each attack, piercing each defense. Dura had taught me the fundamentals of swordfighting, but it was here I learned to apply those lessons.

We fought our way to the center of the nest. There, in a huge

cavern, stood strange, deformed buildings surrounding a sunken arena. It was overlooked by a huge idol of some nameless demon shaped from a single block of stone twenty feet tall.

In the arena lay the broken, shattered remains of twenty people who had been tortured for the savage amusement of the Kyuarch. I cannot describe what those unfortunates suffered, but those who had been flayed and gutted in the slaughterhouse above had been the lucky ones. Four remained alive when we reached them. We sent them mercifully on to their gods.

Then the Kyuarch rallied.

They poured out of the blackness, from every shadow and crevice, forcing us back toward the tunnel we came down. Dozens of slaves, armed with weapons taken from their dead captors, fought desperately but quickly fell before the Dark Ones. I last saw Prilg then, standing over three children who were too tired to run. By the time we reached the tunnel, there were only eleven of us left.

After the first rush, the attacks were erratic. The Kyuarch would attack, then fall back time and again, with often only minutes, but sometimes much longer between assaults. We finished our dwindling rations, most going to the half-starved slaves we rescued. Despite their poor condition, they took their turns in line and fought with a savage fury that made them equal to any of us.

We carefully picked our defensive positions, denying the Kyuarch the least advantage. Wherever possible, we stood where three of us could face two of them. Behind the line, two more held torches so those in front could fight unencumbered, and stood ready to step in for anyone wounded. Behind them, the others rested and tended to their wounds.

I began to sing. With my poor box-harp I sang as we rested, I sang as we retreated, I sang as others held the line, and when on the line myself I still sang, wielding my sword in place of the harp. When I sang tunes known to others, they sang with me; otherwise I sang alone. Ballads and war songs, drinking songs and hymns. Anything at all to keep us going.

I couldn't guess the hours we stood and fought in that first tunnel. We lost three of the captives there.

Darial fought better than any of us dared hope. She fought as one possessed, and indeed she may have been, for her brother was among the victims in the arena. Then, as Incolbaw warned us, the potion she had drunk wore off.

She was on the line, fighting strongly, when suddenly one leg collapsed beneath her. The warrior she faced lunged forward, piercing her chain shirt as she fell. The boy beside her reacted quickly, spearing the exposed Kyuarch, but in doing so left himself open to the second Kyuarch's sword. He was cut down. Dura roared and leaped forward to engage the Kyuarch as I dragged Darial up the tunnel.

I cradled Darial's head in my lap as I grabbed my pouch to get my potion. At my movement, she cried out and half rose, then sank back.

"Please, Master Bainnor, sing for me," she whispered as I desperately fumbled the stopper out of the vial.

"Anything you want. Now drink," I commanded, holding the potion to her lips. She feebly pushed the vial away.

"Sing. Sing me . . ."

A long breath escaped her and she sagged in my arms, her request unspoken. I knew the draught would be wasted on her. I sat for a moment, closed her eyes, then put her potion with my own and joined Dura.

The foe pressed us relentlessly, forcing us to fall back to the tunnel beyond the slaughterhouse. As we passed through the carnage, Bowman and Gibban paused to recover arrows from the previous skirmish. Bowman was still in the room when Kyuarch began pouring in from below. He calmly loosed his last four arrows, then he drew his sword and

began to fight his way toward us.

Gibban loosed his last arrows from where he stood near the tunnel, then discarded his bow and drew his matched long daggers. Each was eighteen inches long from pommel to point, with eleven inches of razor-sharp, double-edged blade. He moved through the Kyuarch surrounding Bowman as in a dance, twisting and gliding between the slow, hulking foes, never pausing as he parried and thrust and slashed with his flashing blades. Then he was beside the constable.

Slowly, Gibban and Bowman edged their way back to where we held the tunnel. When they finally reached us, they were both cut and bleeding from a dozen wounds. Gibban drank his potion, but before he was able to fight again we lost one more survivor and retreated another hundred feet.

I was exhausted. I felt I could hardly lift my sword. A Kyuarch spear slid through my defense and struck me high in the chest. I staggered, fell, saw the last survivor step over me and take on the Kyuarch who hit me. A pounding in my ears muffled the sound of the fighting as I felt myself dragged back, farther and farther.

Something pressed against my lips, and I tasted a sourness like green berries. An odd warmth spread through my chest. Within moments, the pain had disappeared and the roar in my ears subsided, and I knew Gibban had pulled me off the line. I tried to sit up but fell back in a fit of coughing. For several minutes I coughed up blood and liquid that had settled in my lungs, then my chest cleared and I was able to breathe easily. I was weak, but I could feel myself grow stronger by the moment. In another ten minutes I was not only healed but my weariness was gone as well, and I was ready to fight again.

I relieved Bowman on the line. The Kyuarch I faced seemed to recognize me and barked a message over its shoulder. We fought on, but after seeing first Gibban, then myself wounded only to return whole and fit minutes later, the enemy seemed reluctant to close with us, particularly when Gibban and I held the line.

The respite was short lived, then they came on again.

As we withdrew toward the chamber where the livestock had been butchered, Dura and I were each wounded. I healed myself a second time, with Darial's potion, and Dura finally drank his own, after which he unbound his broken arm. Healed and invigorated, Dura and I stepped back into line, relieving Bowman and Gibban. This time the Kyuarch broke and fled back into the depths. We quickly followed, hoping to ambush the enemy farther in than they expected. We moved down to almost where I was first wounded, chose a likely spot and waited for the Kyuarch to return. An hour passed, then another.

"They're up to something," Dura muttered. "I still don't hear them." He stood and picked up his cudgel. "I'm going to see what's going on."

Dura whirled his massive cudgel like a willow switch with one hand, picked up a dropped Kyuarch spear in the other, and slipped silently into the darkness.

Long minutes passed, then we heard the clash of weapons down the tunnel. Before we could go to Dura's aid, we too were attacked, this time from above. Kyuarch warriors surprised Bowman and the last survivor, who had been resting behind us, wounding the constable and killing the other.

Gibban and I charged them, but these were not the ones we had fought before. They were not intimidated. They did not give way until we had killed three of them. By that time, it was too late for Bowman.

Soon we knew it was too late for us as well. Dura did not return, but instead more Dark Ones came up from below. Gibban and I were fighting back to back in an alcove just below the slaughterhouse. We fought for hours, it seemed, drawing our strength from sips of Bowman's potion, but

soon it was gone. Our last torch flickered low; it was dying and so were we.

Suddenly the Kyuarch above us broke off and ran. We heard fighting in the chamber above us, and then twenty heavily armed and armored men of the Royal Guard brushed by in pursuit of those that had fled down the tunnel. A second squad followed, then a third and fourth. They all glanced at us in amazement as they passed.

Gibban and I made our way out of the hellish tunnels to where a fifth squad had set up a perimeter around the mouth of the cave.

"How did you know?" I asked the corporal in charge. "Our messenger couldn't have reached Enatorj so quickly, not in this weather."

"We been riding for two days," replied the corporal. "A woman came to the post, said her sister talked to her by stones from Leyda's Rest, that the Kyuarch were out and that she was rescued by a group of madmen that were off to take on their whole blasted army by themselves."

"It must have been Soma. But that was only yesterday."

"No, sir. 'S been two full days. Fact, 's a miracle any of you're still alive. I kinda thought that you'd all ended up like that'un over there."

The corporal pointed to where Guardsman Rishi lay among a half dozen bodies under a tree near the cave.

"Seems they was surprised coming out of that tunnel down in the first chamber. The Guardsman stood his ground while most of the folks escaped, but they finally got him. There was four dead Kyuarch down there with him. Left them fer the lizards."

The corporal spit in the snow.

"Guess he'll get a medal out of this—not that he's got any use fer it now. But you two, yer real heroes!"

The corporal's words echoed in my mind. A real hero. All I did was survive.

There were heroes that day. Darial's alert, Bowman's honor, and Soma's warning may have saved hundreds of lives.

But, oh, the lives we lost.

The troops eventually brought them all out. First Bowman, then Darial and Dura, and finally Prilg. And all those who died with them.

We built a pyre for them all, for our friends and companions and for the nameless victims. As the pyre was lit, I remembered Darial's last request.

"Sing me . . ."

The dirge I wrenched out of the box-harp was all but inaudible beneath the crack and roar of the fire, but I sang anyway, a lament for Darial and for a world that might have been. I sang as I never had before. Despite the weariness of two days fighting and the strain of singing through hours of combat, my voice was clearer and surer than ever before.

Soma's amulet lay cold upon my breast.

When the song was done and the souls of our companions were released from their ashes, I added the box-harp to the dying embers. The heat was still intense enough that within a moment the golden varnish on the harp blistered, the thin wood caught, and it vanished in a sudden flaring of white flame.

Without another look at the cleanly smoldering coals, I wrapped Dura's broadsword in the leather that had once housed my box-harp, strapped it to my back, and falling in step with Gibban, walked out of the forest.

Ω

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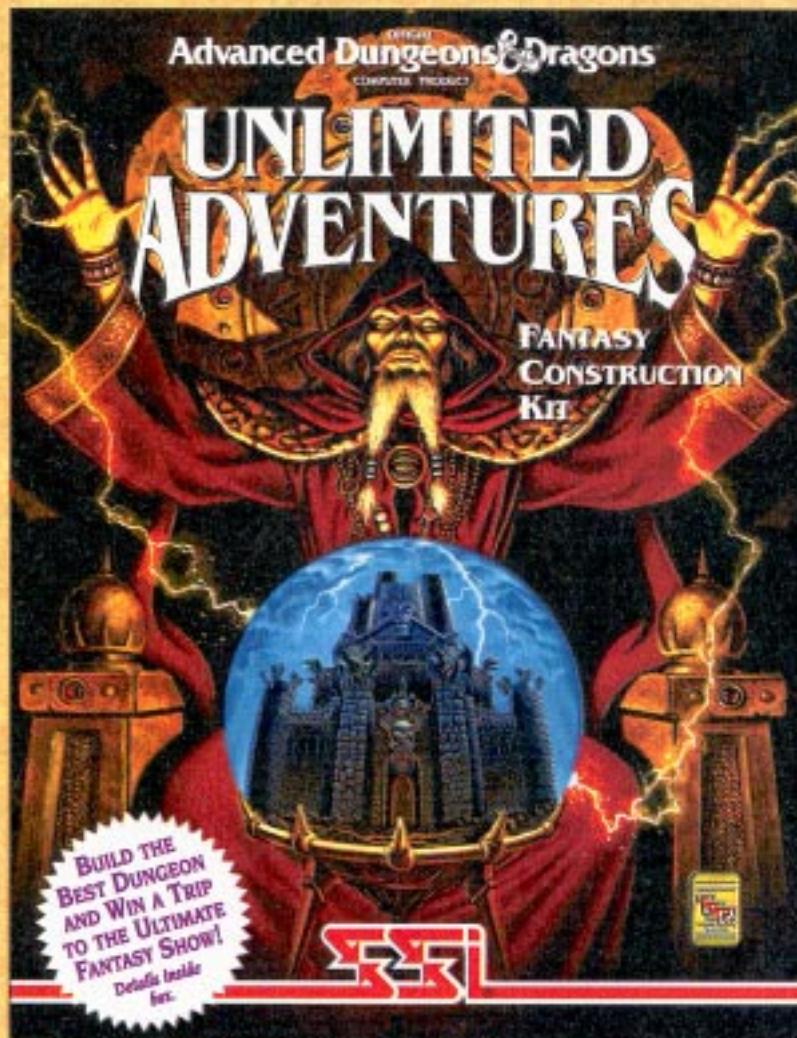
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Amazon
Access
Software)

Explore the Amazonian Eden

KnightLine

A few issues ago, we discussed an on-line service called Legends of Future Past. We've received updated information from that company—their telephone number is (800)825-8852 and they are located in Shrewsbury, Mass. You may now become a member for only \$12.95. This includes a free hour of on-line time and account processing. If, within the first 30 days, you're not satisfied with the service, the sign-up fee is refundable. Now, that's customer service.

Speaking of on-line services, we've just enjoyed an all-too brief experience with The Sierra Network. If you are a PC/MS-

DOS gamer, we encourage you to sign on just to enjoy the service's great, new, real-time fantasy role-playing game (FRPG) *The Shadow of Yseribus*. You create your character and then join other on-line gamers in an adventure exploring a maze of dun-

geons. As you'd expect, there's plenty of danger—loners don't last long! We learned that much immediately.

When you enter the dungeon, your on-screen presentation shows others around you. With the Chat mode, you can speak to any of the other gamers that are present. Tell them of your skills; they may need you for their adventuring group. Discuss defensive and offensive plans, or query those who have experienced the dungeons regarding its secrets and horrors. It's so great to be able to move about as a member of a real-time FRPG group without having to assemble several players in your home or office. The graphics and the

Computer games' ratings

X	Not recommended
**	Poor
***	Fair
****	Good
*****	Excellent
	Superb

sound are top-notch. Full-color mapping showing doorways and messages of import when confronting critters add excitement to your experience.

Our only regret is that we don't have a local node for the game. As Sierra's online charges are so reasonable, we would've spent far more time on-line, but the long-distance calls to a node prohibited the hours of play necessary to complete a full review. We recommend you contact Sierra at (800) SIERRA-1 and obtain your membership kit. It's got lots of information—you really can't lose with The Sierra Network, especially if you're a dedicated FRPG gamer.

H.E.L.P.

Kris Morton, of Oak Harbor, Wash., writes, "I received *BattleTech: The Crescent Hawk's Inception* for Christmas. I am at the point where I need to find the access code for the cache. I have also rescued a Crescent Hawk member from prison. My problem is, I can't locate any other members, and Jason can't figure out the riddle in the laboratory. Any information would be appreciated."

This letter came from Aaron Method of Decatur, Ill., a *Pool of Radiance* gamer. "I am desperate. My characters have cleared everything except Valjevo Castle. My problem is two-fold. After I slew Yarash in his pyramid, I ran into a bunch of Giant Mantises. Now, three of my characters cannot move on the combat screen. All other functions remain normal, and only three of my characters (two human fighters and a half-elf cleric/fighter/magic-user) were affected. Does anybody know what could've caused this to happen and how to correct it? It occurred 23 days ago, game time. My second problem is the Castle itself. I've cleared everything surrounding the walls. I've killed Tyranthraxus and that magic-user in the tower by the entrance to the maze, but I haven't found out how to clear out the castle."

Andy Terrill of Pleasant Valley, Miss., writes, "I have been having some trouble with *Dark Queen Krynn*. Every time I get to the end of a quest (Light Tower, Aurim), I run into gray doors that I can't get through, even with Knock spells. I would appreciate it if you could enlighten me."

Tom Hailey of Raleigh, N.C., writes regarding the "Clue corner" section in an issue that discussed the game *Wasteland*. "It pays to improve your I.Q. as much as possible. After a while, skills can be raised even if you don't have the right number of skill points. I was able to raise a character's brawling skill to above 200."

There have been a good number of requests from gamers involved in *Dungeon Master*. Ian Richmond from Michigan answers the question posed by Bruce Stevens of Columbus, Ohio. "The Neta And Ros paths do meet under the Demon Director, but require two different solu-



Amazon (Access Software)

tions. To open the door through Neta, you force a skeleton into the alcove. When this is done, "God" strikes it down with lightning. This is the priestly way to do it. The ninja way is to lead a skeleton into the teleporter. When it is behind the door, pelt him with missile weapons. That is why the rocks are in this room."

Reviews

Amazon: Guardians of Eden *****
Access Software, PC/MS-DOS computers

Amazon is amazing. It's wonderful to play, not only because the graphics and animation are top-notch, but because of the simplified user-interface, digitized sound, full motion-picture clips, and cut-scene animation worthy of a professional studio. Add to this mixture a first-rate adventure reminiscent of the serials of the 1930s and 1940s and you have entertainment worth the price of admission.

The opening movie is entertaining, especially as it shows the Amazonian jungle while the credits are listed. The camera pans across a clearing in the jungle late at night, the moonlight reflecting on the leaves of the trees. Two men can be seen highlighted by a campfire. The scene switches to the interior of a tent—one of the men near the campfire screams, rises up, his shadow reflected against the tent's canvas—an arrow protruding from his chest as he falls. There's a shot and a body falls through the tent opening, awakening the sleeping man inside. And so the tale begins.

The rest of the story deals with two brothers who are, in many respects, com-

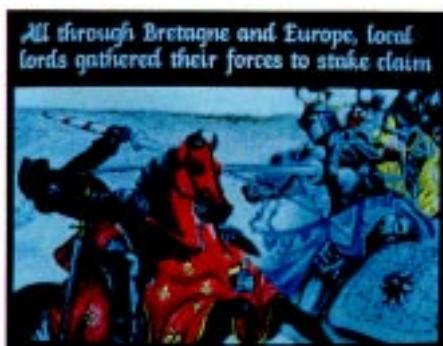


plete opposites of one another. Allen Roberts travels the world as a research scientist for Allister Research. Jason, 10 years younger, also works for Allister Research. He is the all-American boy. For several months, Allen has been in the Amazon River basin. On August 10, the Allister Research Expedition Base Camp is attacked early in the morning. Six weeks later in Woodland, Oregon, where the research company is located, Jason arrives at work, unaware that thousands of miles away, events are drawing him into an amazing adventure. It doesn't take long for the head of the company, Mr. Thornick, to tell Jason that his brother is missing. Jason stumbles out to the parking lot and drives home where he checks the mail. A battered package wrapped in brown paper with South American postmarks is among the letters. After finding a letter opener to cut the twine that secures the package, you find a letter from Allen, and the chapter ends, urging you to continue the adventure in Chapter Two.

As you delve into the game, you learn from a letter written by Allen that the expedition was attacked by someone or something. A great discovery was about to be uncovered, one that ruthless men



Castles II (Interplay)



would stop at nothing to obtain. Allen also believes supernatural powers are at work. Now you've got to help him by recovering the contents of his storage drawer inside the mountain vault at Allen Research. No one must know what you're doing, so you'll have to be resourceful to get into the vault. Along with Allen's letter, there is a key to his cabinet that allows you get the combination to his safe. You must also use the Little Orphan Annie decoder ring you both played with when you were children to locate him, as those instructions are in code.

You should try to examine everything possible. For example, it's all well and good to know about mixing the jungle weed known as The Heart with rubbing alcohol. But you must follow the recipe as found in a certain book. Would the Bunsen burner in your lab assist in preparing the liquid? And how can you get past the security force in order to get to the secure mountain vault? Stay tuned and find out as you explore *Amazon*.

The deeper you journey into the adventure, the more puzzles you must solve. You also "direct" other characters from

time to time. Portraits of those characters you control appear on-screen and you select the one you wish to maneuver. The puzzles are rich, in some cases, and require you to recall objects, statements, or other nuances encountered earlier in the game. In order to complete actions, you must have completed all necessary prerequisites.

Some of the adventure requires you to complete arcade or skill portions in real time. You should save your game before attempting these scenarios. You'll find that some will require several attempts. Additionally, each time you encounter a new scene, you should save the game at the start and at the conclusion of that scene. We found that, even after we thought we had completed every step or located every item in a previous scene, a later scenario required something we had overlooked. Had we simply updated each success in a single saved game, we would have had to start over simply to obtain the item we overlooked.

Amazon also offers Super-VGA graphics. The program can install the VESA graphic driver for you if you don't have it installed. Additionally, because the game uses Real-sound, even those without sound boards can enjoy digitized voices. A window containing the animated character synchronized with the voice is worth noting and adds a touch of additional realism to the adventure. Access Software has managed an outstanding job with *Amazon* and this is a graphic adventure you should consider including in your software library. We reviewed this game using VGA graph-

ics, the Soundblaster compatible Thunder Board, and a Roland CM-32L LA Sound Module.

Castles II: Siege and Conquest

Interplay, PC/MS-DOS computers

Interplay revamped *Castles*, their original castle adventure, to satisfy some consumer complaints about the game. In this sequel, you must deal with a number of different situations rather than simply build castles, though the latter activity is still available.

You start the game with a level-three status. This level is applied to different tasks. Only one task can be assigned to administrative, military, or political sections at a time. However, if your level in one of those areas rises above five, you'll gain the ability to control two activities simultaneously. Some tasks cannot be accomplished until you reach a specific level or possess the required commodities. For example, to recruit archers, you need at least level-two status in military and must be able to supply at least one level for recruiting archers. Additionally, one timer and one gold is required to build the bows and arrows and to hire the archers.

Tasks can be completed faster by applying more than one level to it. If you have a level-four status in military, you can apply all four levels to recruiting archers, though you can also shift some of your military levels into other sections. If you have only three administrative levels working on gathering timber, you can put two of your military levels into making that job proceed more quickly (though you can't shift more personnel into an area than there are already at work there).

Not only do you have to maintain and expand your kingdom, you also must keep political action swinging in your favor. You can view a chart that shows your current state of affairs with other lords, counts, and the Pope. This chart is on a scale from one to nine. A one or two means that war is imminent and you should consider placing your border countries on a defensive footing. An eight or nine indicates a strong ally—trade is possible. Angering the Pope is not a good idea, for if your political state with him drops below a two, you'll be excommunicated and the game ends. At the same time, you must keep your own citizens happy—if their rating drops too low, they revolt and your reign could end. Spies and scouts can be sent to neighboring countries to see what commodities are there and who currently owns the territory. Through spying you can also dismantle or destroy armies, halt production of supplies, or throw a monkey wrench into opposition castle-building operations.

Castle building requires large amounts of resources and planning. The size of your castle determines not only the length

of time required to build it, but also how its construction will affect that country. By building a castle of at least 50 points, the production of the commodity there doubles. A castle of at least 100 points in size prevents revolt. You must select the location in the country, the castle's wall size, and its location. The actual building process has been streamlined from the original game, but we thought this reduced the fun of building towers of varying heights, or having the option to prepare cauldrons or add arrow slits, absent in this sequel.

Combat is a large portion of the game. It can be handled by the computer automatically, or you can request the tactical battle mode (similar to the first *Castles*). You receive an overhead view of your troops, the enemy, and the terrain. Individual units or groups can be assigned to stand and fight, charge the enemy, or retreat. This game allows for sieges and includes three new units: ballistas, catapults, and siege towers. The ballistas and catapults can be assigned to knock out enemy units or destroy the castle. Terrain has an effect on troop movement, defense against arrows, and hand-to-hand combat. Combat is smoother than in the first game, but still could be enhanced with better graphics and the ability to reveal individual troop strengths at a click of a button.

Castles II is a slightly misleading name, for there is actually less castle building and more conquest and political struggles. We were hoping for intricate castle-building capabilities with even more options than the original game. The other factors of commodities, combat, and expanded political intrigue are nice touches, but have little to do with building castles. If you are looking for a good medieval strategy game, this game is for you. However, if you like building castles and holding them against enemies, we recommend the first *Castles* game with its Northern Campaign expansion disk. We reviewed this game using VGA graphics and a Sound Blaster sound board.

The Incredible Machine Sierra, PC/MS-DOS computers

Remember the *Looney Tunes* and the *Tom and Jerry* cartoons wherein the characters made mousetraps and other devices with elaborate parts such as bowling balls, hamsters running around in wheels, and ropes attached to teeter-totters? Sierra has taken that idea and formed a puzzle-strategy game that is highly addictive. Your mission is to complete 75 different objectives, such as popping balloons or putting a ball through a hoop. Though it may sound like child's play success doesn't come easily.

You can select more than 45 different parts to complete the activity. Items include lights, rope, magnifying glasses, cats, scissors, fish bowls, cannons, mon-



The Incredible Machine (Sierra)

keys on bicycles, and others. Your construction must allow the starting motion for your "Rube Goldberg device" to be sufficient to complete the activity.

Placing the parts is simple and user friendly—it reminded us of using a simplified desktop publishing program. All you do is drag out the selected piece and lay it down on-screen. Pieces can be rotated, enlarged, or scaled to better fit your overall design scheme. Bonus points at the bottom of the screen reward you for completing the puzzle as well as the amount of time it took your device to do its job. A free-form area allows you to make your own wacky machine. Here you can mess around with air pressure and gravity, making some really unique machines. This offering is quite simple to learn, thoroughly addicting, and hard to master—however, it will entertain the child within you. We reviewed this game using VGA graphics and Soundblaster sound card.

Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis

LucasArts Games, Macintosh computers (PC/MS-DOS version also available)

This is a terrific graphic adventure. LucasArts has managed to put together an original Indiana Jones adventure, and they've done a superb job of creating a thought-provoking action adventure that'll have you running around the world in search of Atlantis. You are not alone in the search, however. The Nazis are most interested in Atlantis too, as there is a power that could provide them with awesome superweapons with which to win the war!

One of the most pleasing aspects of *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis* (Fate) is its replay factor. At a certain stage



in the game, you must select one of three paths upon which to continue the adventure: You may select to proceed with a partner, Sophia, who was once an assistant on one of your archaeological digs; you may proceed alone and tackle it from the Wits aspect; or you may decide you wish to involve yourself in a more active Fists mode. This enables you to replay the game and take different tracks each time!

The opening scenes are more than just splash screens for credits—watch carefully, for there is much information in these animations. You also must make decisions during the opening animations and direct Indy to complete certain actions. The early part of the game revolves around trying to find a book written by Plato that contains very important clues to finding Atlantis. You'll have to move items around in order to find other items that reveal information about the location of the book. You'll have to deal with some savory, and many unsavory, characters. For example, there's a doorman and stagehand in New York who can drive you crazy as you try to contact Sophia. How you finally get to talk to Sophia also indicates which mode she will recommend to you for completing the game.

There are many cut scenes throughout the adventure that are a real treat to

watch. They flow directly into the action and really enhance play. You'll have to learn how to obtain certain items in order to affect later gameplay.

We found the partnership mode with Sophia to be the most entertaining way to play the adventure. She was an capable and credible partner who enabled Indy to do things he would've otherwise had to use more force to accomplish. The great thing about *Fate* is you can always go back to the beginning of the game and select another of the modes to complete the game. We can't speak highly enough of this offering, and we ask LucasArts to consider future Indiana Jones game releases to please gamers of all ages. Add Macintosh and Amiga game formats and even more fans will be delighted with the opportunity to have Indy on their computer platforms. This graphic adventure is definitely a must-buy!

Lemmings

Psygnosis, Macintosh computers

Superb arcade action for Mac gamers is what *Lemmings* gives you. There's really been nothing this good since *Prince of Persia* from Bröderbund. There's no way you're going to be able to sit and play just one level.

The lemmings are cute little creatures that require your assistance. They are confronted with a variety of impediments that can cause their deaths, and you don't want that to occur. They are looking to you to become their Moses, to take them to their promised land.

Each level has a specific goal you must attain—you'll be informed at each level's splash screen how many lemmings will drop from the trapdoor for the current level, the percentage you must save, and how many minutes have you to accomplish this. You are also informed as to the difficulty level (Fun, Tricky, Taxing, and Mayhem) selected. At the bottom of your screen are 12 icons. These are your "orders" for the action. There are eight direction actions (or skills) you can apply to a Lemming, from a Climber (for climbing walls) to a Digger (for digging directly down). The other icons control the speed at which lemmings drop through the trap door, let you "pause" the game, or bring on Armageddon, which is a great way to quit a level because your strategy isn't working. All the lemmings are disintegrated into tiny lemming pieces and you can start over. You'll be an Armageddon fan as you range into the higher levels of this game.

The game gets extremely hectic when you're trying to control the lead lemming, while others are piling up behind it, awaiting their opportunity to rush to the exit. Naturally, you want to make certain all is in working order before releasing the masses. We found that allowing the lead lemming to do most of the work, while

using Blockers to hold the others at bay, is the best route to ensure a safe and orderly progression to the exit. If your plan isn't working for your lead lemming, better to let one die than risk your entire covey of critters.

Screens between levels indicate the passwords that allow you to regain access to a level should you need to turn off your computer for something as mundane as dinner. There are no saved games, you simply request a new level from the Main Menu and enter the access code and away you go. One of the tricky elements is that, depending upon your selected difficulty and number level, the skills icons are limited in number. In other words, even though you have 50 lemmings popping through the trapdoor, your floater command only allows 20 accesses (it gives the selected lemming an umbrella with which to break falls). This means, unless you find another method to get the lemmings down from the high palisades, 30 of those in your charge will fall to their squealing deaths without aid of the umbrellas so graciously afforded the 20 you could alter into floaters. This means there must be a better way! One tactic that worked rather well was the second the level appeared on-screen, access the Pause icon and halt gameplay. Then, take your time and scroll around each level, looking for various routes that take advantage of the skills your lemmings can possess.

Lemmings is a highly absorbing, fantastically fun game that'll make you and your Mac happy for hours upon hours.

M4

Dangerous Software, Macintosh computers

There are many tank simulations on the market. This is one of the best we've seen for the Macintosh as it really captures the look and feel of an M4-Sherman tank in World War II. The game comes with a set of earphones to bring the sound of that era directly to your ears. Communications from HQ and from other units in the battle zone, complete with scratchy static, enhance the game to the point where you can actually believe you are commanding a tank.

There are no difficult commands to remember. Everything is point-and-click on a graphic representation of a piece of tank hardware and that is the command to activate. A map overlay allows you to navigate toward your sector. The communication screen is really great. You set the frequency to listen and respond to commands, weather reports, and the like. Very little has been left out of this simulation. We feel *M4* is one of those combat simulations that'll win friends, even with those who normally don't enjoy such gaming.

Push-Over

Ocean Software, Amiga computers

The folks at Ocean are still pumping out great games for the Amiga. One of them is a puzzle game called *Push-Over*. It possesses wonderful character animation, sounds, and be warned, it is addictive.

You play G.I. Ant, a soldier ant who must negotiate nine different continents within Captain Rat's Treasure Caves. These continents are part of a Domino Domain—to gain access to the next cave, all of the dominoes must be felled with one push by Mr. Ant. But a special domino, called the trigger, must be the last one to fall. This requires you to manipulate dominoes in unique ways to make sure they all fall, including the trigger domino, and still be able to exit the level within the time limit.

Not all of the dominoes are normal. Some of them actually fall upwards, others bridge gaps, some rebound, and a couple don't tumble at all. It is up to you to position them in such a way to allow you to exit the level. If you complete the level and exit it, you receive a token that can be used in one of two ways: Use it to successfully complete a level, even if you are over the time limit, or, to take back a "push," since you only receive one push per level. Along the way you may receive a cash-bundle upon completing a level. Collecting ten of these transports you to the last screen.

The music and animation are fabulous, the introduction cute and colorful, and the action fast and furious. *Push-Over* is a strategy game to delight and entertain your family in the same way *Lemmings* has entertained thousands of arcade gamers.

Space Legions

Mindscape, PC/MS-DOS computers

Space Legions is the third offering in the Star Legions saga by Mark Baldwin and his Supernova Creations. It's good, but not revolutionary. This time around, you get to play the great evildoers of the galaxy, the Krellans, in planetary conflict and acquisition. As a new commander of the Krellan forces, your object is to totally destroy the United Galactic Alliance (UGA) and the democracy that is spreading from planet to planet. Your earliest invasions are simple, perhaps too simple, as you later confront everything from planetary shields to well-trained and well-armed UGA forces on various planets. Many times, you'll find the local militia of higher technology planets quite challenging for your forces. And the Krellan command brooks no disappointments. You're given a specific amount of time within which to defeat a planet, as well as a varying array of forces, depending on the planet you are assigned to conquer.

Despite cartoon-like graphics (that we feel really detract from the realism of the

game), the game's interface is good. You control all action from the invasion control console in your battlecruiser. The console consists of six panels, which are comprised of separate monitors or readout screens.

You "scan" the planet you've been assigned to invade. You may select various orbits, from high to low altitude, in order to receive the data on the cities that must be conquered. Once that data is known, you can bombard the cities with lasers or torpedoes, or you may target the cities for assault by your forces. Once you've scanned the cities, you'll be able to determine which are the most heavily defended. If they appear to be too well-defended, which could exact a high toll on your invading forces, perhaps a torpedo or laser fire is best suited to take that city out. However, destroying cities lowers your overall rating. You want to conquer each planet and keep their industries and cities undamaged, if at all possible.

Otherwise, you must send in your shock troops first to a quadrant for each city you've selected for invasion. (Make certain you check out the appropriate display to ascertain the number of UGA troops that might be able to meet your assault on the ground!) Once they have teleported to the location, you give one of your units the command to construct a

landing pad for your drop ships. The drop ships transport your powerful warriors to the scene to take over the attack on the city. You designate the troop type and number of warriors to be transported by drop ship via the Drop Ships Control Panel. It is always advisable to have more drop ships loaded and ready to drop than you believe might be necessary. Planetary ground forces can surprise even the most conservative estimates you might have early in the game as to how many of your troops will be required to defeat a city.

Once a drop ship has transported your warriors to the sector location and your warriors have exited the ship, you should Group your remaining troops and withdraw them from battle. You should also have your drop ship return to its mother ship, just in case you need that landing zone for another assemblage of warriors. Now you can command all your warriors, or select individual units for various commands. You may order them into Standard mode, which leaves them free to rampage to their hearts' content until you control the sector. You may use the Capture command, which orders your troops to occupy the city and industrial blocks as quickly as possible. You can order them to Reduce, which means to eliminate enemy forces and not worry about occupying territory. Once the planet has surrendered,

you gain the rewards and acclaim fit a Krellan commander—depending upon how well you accomplished your mission.

Space Legions tends to become a little monotonous after you've handled the conquest of several planets. It's always the same attack mode, with little animation to speak of. The digitized speech (when using a Sound Blaster or compatible board, like the Thunderboard) is a great addition to the game. When you command various actions, your officers report to you (in a separate window) that something has been accomplished, or ask you for further specifics. The higher you climb in the Krellan command, the more honors and awards you receive, and the more difficult the planetary invasions become. However, with the Freeze command, you can assess each situation comfortably after you've scanned the planet and can determine a winning course of action. One great little trick is, on those planets with strong UGA or militia forces, to use feints to throw off the home guard. Use your shock troops to set up believable attack zones in various sectors around a city, then teleport down your actual landing-pad shock troops to an area concealed by terrain in a far sector. While the home guard is busy defending itself against your original troops, your landing pad is finished and your stronger warriors can land and mop up. For science-fiction adventure gamers, *Space Legions* is a good game to examine at your retailer to see if it's what you're looking for. Don't expect ship-to-ship combat. This game is pure planetary invasion from the safety of your command post. We reviewed this game using VGA graphics and the Thunderboard sound card.

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Carriers At War

Strategic Studies Group, PC/MS-DOS computers

If you enjoy strategic war games, *Carriers At War* (CAW) is an extremely good offering. With historic, fictional, and random scenarios CAW offers high replayability. Although the animation and sound are both limited, the graphics representing the naval and air forces in the Pacific in World War II are top notch. Watch the results of your air attacks on enemy carrier groups. Control the air strikes your carriers loose upon land bases, ports, and naval targets. SSG includes an extremely worthwhile tutorial which, if played, will have you feeling comfortable with the commands in about 20 to 30 minutes of gameplay. Controlling either U.S. or Japanese forces, you can replay the attack on Pearl Harbor and see how you might have handled the battle. Or select one of four scenarios and test your mettle. CAW's ease of learning and its exciting play could lead many a gamer into becoming a strategic war gamer. We think CAW could be enjoyed by many who

haven't attempted a strategic war game before. We reviewed this game using VGA graphics and the Thunderboard sound board.

Eric the Unready

Legend Entertainment; distributed by Accolade, PC/MS-DOS computers

This adventure game is hilarious! As Eric the Unready, it seems as though everything you attempt is jinxed from the start. Impaling your instructor in knight school, burning down a shop, even accidentally defeating an opposing knight with an abundance of apples, are all but a hint of the terror you'll cause as you go from quest to quest trying to right wrongs! Even at your celebration dinner at Duke Theobold the Erratic's castle, you wreak havoc and set the castle afire. *Eric the Unready*, however, contains far too much "bathroom" humor and too many crude jokes. This makes the game unsuitable for anyone but adults, which is a shame. The user interface is up to Legend's high standard, and the graphics are top-notch. The parser is good and you can combine a tremendous number of words to talk with non-player characters. If you're over 18 and don't mind some off-color jokes, then ETU is worth your time to investigate. We reviewed this game using VGA graphics and the Thunderboard sound board.

Paladin II

Omnitrend Software, distributed by Impressions; PC/MS-DOS computers

A couple of years ago, before VGA graphics, fluid animation, superior sound, and point-and-click interfaces became the new standard, *Paladin II* would've received a higher rating. There is really nothing special about this strategy adventure game. With a point-and-drag interface *Breach* gamers should be familiar with, your characters' turn encompasses everything from directional movement, turning to new facings, and combat. It seems slower and more awkward than it is, but that's because other fantasy games are so much better at handling the user interface than *Paladin II*. You can import *Breath* characters, and the game comes with a number of scenarios that vary in difficulty from easy to very hard. The game also includes an editor that allows you to create your own scenarios. We recommend you take a look at *Paladin II* at your dealer's to see if you like it.

Task Force 1942

MicroProse, PC/MS-DOS computers

The packaging is very slick. The game's contents are first-rate, as are most MicroProse games. Unfortunately, a small proviso in the README.TXT file on Disk #1 alerts the gamer that the installation program sometimes crashes because of some sound cards you may have installed in your system. MicroProse states it tried to

account for all the various boards, but if there is one that proves to be a problem, you must remedy the situation yourself. This can be done by either removing your sound card or running their "INSTALL-S" program that installs *Task Force 1942* without any sound capability at all. Unfortunately for us, the INSTALL-S program crashed also! Why bother releasing a program with such a major bug? Other games seem to be able to account for a broad range of sound cards. This is most unlike MicroProse. It is not its rule of thumb to lay its programming problems on the consumer. We attempted to install our game three times, and each time it crashed after disk five was inserted. For this reason, we cannot recommend this game—at least, not until MicroProse undertakes the responsible action and releases production disks that address current sound board problems.

Clue corner

Eric the Unready

1. After a couple of quests, you'll enter Forest/Underground day. There are things lying around that you should read.
2. Perhaps something fizzy will work on roots that'll be worth listening to.
3. Sometimes going through things takes two attempts.
4. That pick axe might work on a

diminutive one.

5. Try jumping before the circular item reaches the top.

Eye of the Beholder

1. Try a grid of 31 squares by 31 squares. Make the first square in the lower right corner 0,0.
2. Watch out for the kobolds and leeches that thrive in the Upper Sewer Level.
3. At 13,11, you should locate a Detect Magic mage scroll. Unfortunately, it's in the hands of five kobolds. Try looking in the southwest corner of the room for something edible.
4. At 10,19, you'll want to check out the west wall for some way to travel to the north.
5. At 8,16, put something on the pressure plate and then press the button in the east wall.
6. At 6,12, there are two good scrolls but two kobolds hang out in this area.
7. The way down to the next level, the Middle Sewers, is at 8,18. The next level is populated with zombies and skeletons.

The Lessers

Keep mailing in those hints and tips to assist your fellow gamers! Mail your letters, or postcards to The Lessers, 521 Czerny Street, Tracy CA 95376

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The Druid Gets a Life

These specialty priests can work for nature—and civilization

by Alan M. Clark

Artwork by Karen Wann

As the orcish warband came charging down through the trees, hurling their spears toward the party, Tinstaafl the Dreadful completed his incantation. He chuckled nastily as he lobbed a ball of bat guano toward the orcs. Bursting into flame, the ball streaked up the path into the midst of the enemy and exploded with a dull roar. Orcs screamed as the billowing mass of orange flames enveloped and consumed them.

The party smiled, relieved. Through the smoke and ash of burning leaves, they could make out a few survivors fleeing back up the hill. But their moment of triumph was cut short. From behind a small myrtle bush to their right sprang a skinny, gray-bearded man with oak leaves in his tangled hair and fanatical rage glazing his dark eyes. "Despoilers! Wretches!" he shrieked, brandishing a wilted sprig of mistletoe. "Bringers of the accursed flame!



Thou shalt surely pay! Most grievous shall be thy fire insurance premiums, ere I quit with thee!"

"Oh, get a life!" snapped Trey the Appalling, glaring at the druid with undisguised contempt. "You're so cut off from civilization, you don't even know how weird you are. Don't you have a home, or a job, or anything? Is this all you do with your time? Skulking around in a forest a hundred miles from nowhere, talking to squirrels and threatening people?"

Stunned by this unexpected tirade, the druid stared at Trey in shock for a long, tense moment. Then he bowed his head in dejection, "You're right," he said. "It's not much good. But it's all I could think of."

"That's all right," said Acelia the Unthinkable. "We know how it is. We had a druid with us once, but he kept putting out our campfires and getting us in trouble by freeing caged animals, so we had to

get rid of him."

"I've been meaning to give it up," said the old druid, beginning to sob. "I was going to, I don't know, open a shop. Selling herbs, and and stuff like that."

"Well, that sounds like a very nice idea," said Acelia. "Doesn't everybody agree?"

But suppose there are enough herb shops already. What else is there for druids in most campaigns to do? Clearly, the druid needs a steady job, a home, and a daily routine—in short, a life. How should druids, given their powers and unique concerns, spend their time? The answer can have far-reaching implications for game-world societies.

The magic of farming

After the fall of Rome, European farming was still very primitive. More than 90% of the population was engaged in food

production full-time just to keep Europe fed. Thus, a city of 10,000 people (about the largest city anyone was likely to see outside the old Mediterranean trade centers) needed at least 90,000 farmers, fishermen, and herders nearby to sustain it. They produced little surplus, and a bad season meant starvation for many.

Although the Medieval era is rightly remembered as a time of widespread ignorance and intellectual stagnation, there were some important agricultural advances. The most important of these was the introduction of the three-field crop rotation system, which increased the land's productivity and allowed peasants to grow large amounts of winter fodder crops. This meant that farmers could afford to maintain horses for plowing, instead of slower, less maneuverable oxen. This, in turn, increased the area that could be plowed and planted by a single farmer; and so on, as each advancement paved the way for the next.

Agricultural production, the traditional key to a nation's wealth and prosperity rose steadily with these changes. Europe was transformed. Large towns and cities appeared, along with a middle class of merchants and craftsmen to occupy them. Commerce and learning revived, and feudalism fell into decline, opening the door to the Renaissance. Throughout this period the percentage of the population making their living from the land decreased steadily. By the time of the Renaissance, it was down to approximately 75%.

Continuing improvements in agricultural technology have reduced the food producers to just 2% of the population in Great Britain today, and only slightly more in the rest of Western Europe. The humans of an AD&D® game campaign don't, or shouldn't, have such technology. But they do have magic. How does that help?

Well, there's the spell *control weather*. Unfortunately, a 12th-level wizard or 14th-level priest is needed to cast it. In a well-organized nation, such powerful spell-casters could be pressed into emergency service in the case of a severe drought, for example. But the spell only reduces the impact of a bad season. It isn't practical as a means of regular irrigation.

The first-level priest spell *purify food & drink* can reverse spoilage, a common cause of lost produce. Since it requires only 1st-level priests, it can be used widely and regularly. But, like *control weather*, it can't be used to create new gains. It only prevents losses, enabling towns and cities to be farther from the agricultural regions supporting them.

And there, it seems, we're stuck. There isn't much more that priests and wizards can do for farmers. Increasing yield per acre or stopping insects, molds, and blights from ravaging crops isn't in their

line, let along deciding what to plant when, or how best to use the land. True, priests could use mass castings of *create food & water* to sidestep the whole question. But this is freeloading. The gods aren't likely to continue helping those who won't help themselves. Since the Middle Ages is the model for most campaigns, about 75% of the people are still going to be peasants and farmers. Magic has struck out.

Enter the druids. With their understanding of plants, animals, and the rhythms of nature, they make outstanding agricultural advisors. Only a few of their listed spells are really valuable to a farmer: *Control weather* (discussed above), *plant growth*, and *weather summoning*. However, there is no reason why they can't have created other large-area spells specifically for use in agriculture. The list at the end of this article provides examples.

The payoff

Using the sort of magic just described, and working closely with a country's peasantry, druids could make a tremendous difference to an agrarian society. It seems safe to assume that they could duplicate all of the agricultural advances short of the Industrial Revolution, which began to show major results in agriculture around the middle of the 19th century. If we use Great Britain earlier in that century as a model, this suggests that only about one third (33%) of a nation's people would still need to be food-producers with the druids helping.

For a country's rulers, the benefits of such a system are immense. It frees a huge number of people for tasks that rulers (and gamers) find more interesting, such as waging war, building castles, and waging more war. Cities can grow still larger, creating prowling grounds for thieves and other urban adventurers.

The sharp rise in productivity means greater national wealth. Although this wealth benefits primarily the ruling classes, the common folk are better off, too. Without the threat of starvation making farming, herding, and fishing the only vocational choices, those who prefer other work can seek it. And for those who remain on the farm, a little druidic help makes life much easier.

What's in it for us?

That's all very well for the people and the rulers, but why should the druids bother? They are, after all, neutral. They aren't obliged to be nice. In fact, druids taking part in such a system receive many benefits.

Most obviously, they have tremendous political clout. With the country's economy depending on druids, its rulers want to keep the druids happy. Druidic concerns are with the state of nature and not the state of man, so their requests aren't

likely to tread too heavily in the political arena. Cut wood in this forest, but not in that one; plant a tree for each one taken; forbid the cutting of mistletoe by non-druids; hunt in this region, but not in that one; these are requests the druids might make.

By increasing the productivity of farm land, druids decrease the amount of land needed, leaving more virgin wilderness. There's always a danger of the ready food supply leading to an increase in population, reversing this benefit. If rulers are fighting more frequent wars, the population might be held in check. If not, the druids must be careful to keep food production below certain limits, a political balancing act demanding a large share of the Great Druid's time. It's far better to maintain the balance than resort to drastic measures to restore it.

Perhaps the most important gain for the druids is their community influence. In the rural villages, peasants see druids as selfless benefactors whose presence is vital to their health and prosperity. Consequently, druids enjoy tremendous respect and popularity in the countryside. City folk still consider them rustic oddities, but useful ones nonetheless.

Villagers may rely on the druids, rather than their political overlords, to administer justice and to help them in times of need or danger. Among peasants, druidism also receives much of the religious loyalty that formerly was given to the clerical faiths (although, given the differing emphasis of the two, there should be no reason—as far as the druids are concerned, anyway—why the people can't pay homage to both). This weakening of secular and religious authority displeases the ruling classes, but many nobles and priests tolerate it rather than risk alienating the druids and peasants by enforcing their authority.

As pillars of the community, druids can teach their values and way of life to a receptive audience. This ensures that they and their beliefs will continue to be respected. The country folk also provide a ready pool of new initiates to maintain the ranks of the druidic priesthood. Farmers are happy to apprentice promising children to the local druids, since having a druid in the family is both a mark of prestige and a practical boon. Most druids are likely to be former peasants trained at village temples.

The druid as party animal

Into this society comes a PC druid, Olwen Redleaf. He's a typical rural druid, but he likes to spend his spare time on the road with a band of adventurers. What is his life like?

At the beginning of his career, Olwen lives at a druidic temple, in a secluded stretch of woods in farming country. There are numerous farming villages, and even a few market towns, within an easy

day's walk. During the spring and part of the summer Olwen is kept busy by the senior druids. (Let's hope the DM has required Olwen to devote a slot to the Agriculture nonweapon proficiency, because he's going to need it here.) He makes the rounds of local farms as directed, dispensing advice, mediating disputes, performing routine rituals, dealing with simple problems, and reporting on difficult ones. The rest of the year is quieter, and he has more free time.

Olwen is known and liked among the farm folk of his territory. They're always glad to see him, and any nondruid friends of his are accepted on his word. Of course, Olwen maintains the high moral standards that are expected of a holy man. He can be friendly, but not familiar, as this would compromise his authority.

Like any adventuring priest, Olwen is likely to remain at the fringes of the religious hierarchy. As he advances in power, the senior druids give him more unusual and challenging tasks. Perhaps he'll be the one chosen to investigate an evilly enchanted forest; rumored sightings of a long-lost druidic artifact; the strange behavior of a neighboring archdruid; the sudden, mysterious decline of a region's wildlife; or grain fields that have been flattened in bizarre geometric patterns. He may even have the good fortune to become a personal aide to the Grand Druid, leading to missions throughout the world.

Still, all of this just means that Olwen takes orders from higher up, rather than giving orders himself. His adventuring life keeps him away from the temples, outside the circles of the druidic hierarchy. Should he ever become a full (12th level) druid, or even the Grand Druid, he'll probably be at a loss to cope with his new responsibilities, and will have to rely heavily on more politically astute assistants.

All the while, of course, Olwen is carrying on another, more exciting life as an adventurer. Some of the adventures he and his companions undertake will no doubt stem from his suggestions. When he makes the rounds of his territory, he is bound to stumble across opportunities for adventures. Local heroics are a sound, politically safe arena for adventuring druids.

When his group travels farther afield, Olwen has to be careful. Treasure hunts, fighting monsters and evil humanoids, peace-keeping missions, and the like are all fine. But when his group meddles with the interests of human nations and societies, there's always the danger that Olwen will compromise his neutrality. He may be only one druid, but he's still a representative of his religion. His involvement in a human-versus-human conflict is druidic involvement. If he damages the druids' all-important reputation for impartiality, he'll be in serious trouble.

Going international

Druids want to spread their system to as many countries as possible. This provides a compelling reason for their neutral alignment. The druidic cause is nature, first and foremost. They don't promote any other cause that conflicts with the primary one. If they're to work successfully across borders, they must be seen as (and must be, at least for the most part) above human causes, and concepts of good or evil. They are equally ready to bring the benefits of their way to good, neutral, and evil nations, and this requires that no country or cause have reason to believe that they favor another.

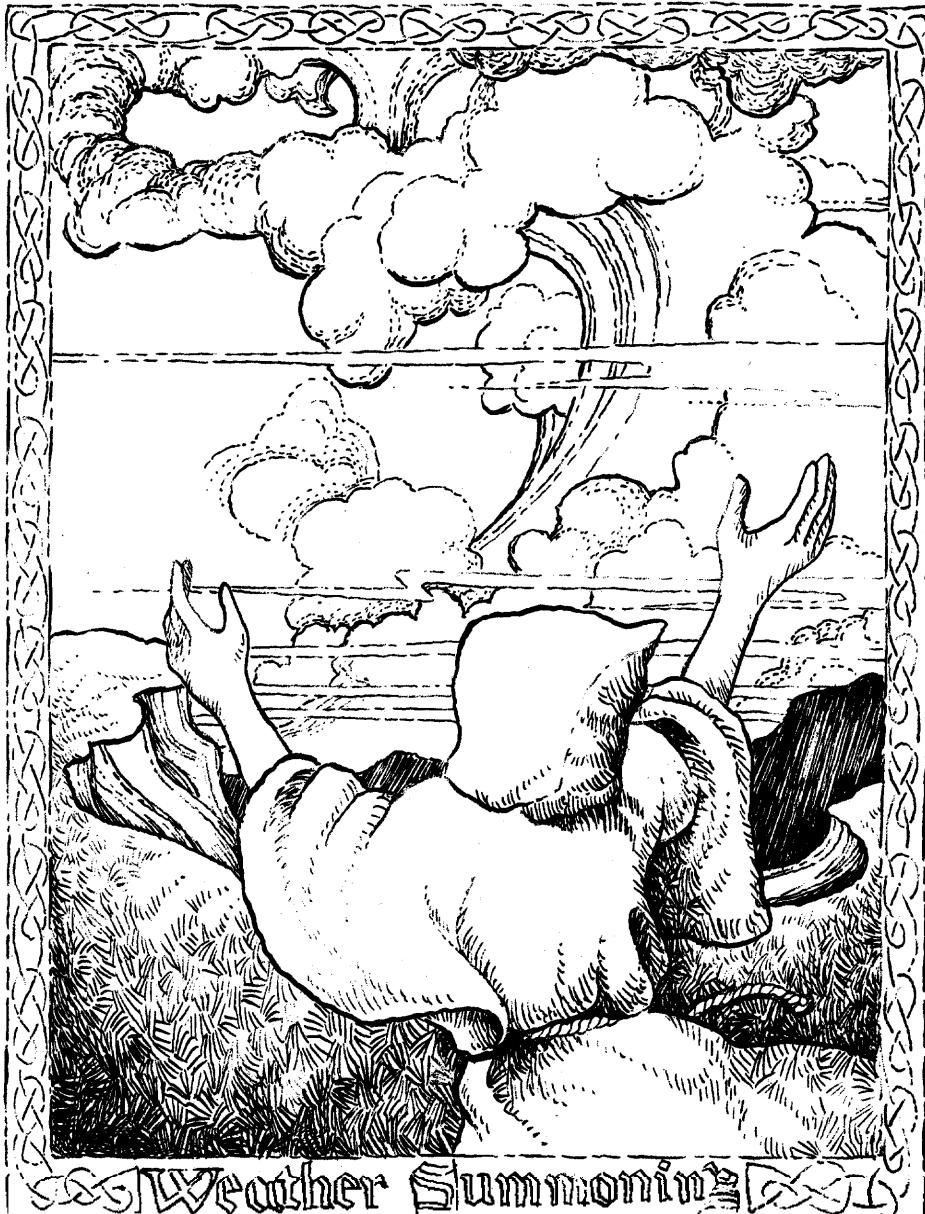
The paranoia of the powerful being what it is, some nations won't trust the druids no matter how clean their record. This is more often a problem with evil rulers, but governments of all alignments can be mistrustful and jealous of their own power. Some don't understand what

the druids are trying to achieve, in which case their very neutrality and refusal to take sides is held against them.

These suspicious lords prohibit druids from giving aid to farmers and other such seditious activities. They see accepting druidic help, even with no strings attached, as sowing the seeds of disloyalty among their people. Sooner or later, druids living under these rulers find their ancient faith denounced, suppressed, and forbidden. The rulers pay a price, because they need more than twice as many peasants to support their lands, but they may consider the greater sense of security well worth it.

Conclusion

By following the policies described, druids set the stage for numerous conflicts. Different ways and beliefs widen the gap between the folk of the town and the countryside. Traditional faiths are angered by the decline of their rural influ-



ence, leading to rivalry and religious antagonism between priests and druids.

Many rulers who have let druidism into their lands find themselves regretting that decision. Having begun to take its benefits for granted, they become ever more uncomfortable with this power loose within their borders, a power that they neither control nor understand. Other lands, aware of the druids' potential influence, choose to make them unwelcome, so druids meet with hostility and persecution in regions where they aren't revered.

All of this is great for a campaign world. Being misunderstood by the unenlightened is a druid's lot in life, and conflict is the essence of exciting campaigns. More significantly, druids now have status and meaning in the game. Far more than just forest-dwelling treehuggers, they are important and respected figures in the rural settings where they live. They have a role that gives both PC and NPC druids new depth and purpose.

New druid spells

First-level spells

Fertility (Alteration) Reversible

Sphere: Plant/Animal

Range: Special

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Six months

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None or neg.

This spell is primarily for use on food crops. It affects all small plants (or one mature tree) per caster level in an area up to 60' per level on each side. If cast within a month of planting (or budding), it boosts the crop yield for the following six months by 5% per level of the druid.

Fertility can also affect one female mammal (including humans, elves, etc.) per level of the druid, although mammals must be touched for the magic to take effect, and targets are allowed saving throws versus spells unless they willingly submit to the spell. For the next six months, all affected mammals will produce offspring after mating, assuming that they weren't sterile to begin with.

In addition to reducing crop yields by 5% per level and preventing affected mammals from bearing young, the reversed spell, *sterility*, can affect a single plantlike monster (e.g. shambling mound, treant, whipweed, yellow mold, etc.) with hit dice less than or equal to the druid's level. Such a monster must be touched; if it fails to save versus spells, *sterility* suppresses its ability to produce and spread seeds, spores, etc. This eliminates, for example, the spore attacks of a yellow mold or yellow musk creeper, or the rhizomes of a gas spore. The druid is not harmed by touching the monster to discharge the spell, although he is subject to the creature's attacks while he gets close.

The material component is a pinch of dried bone marrow, or salt for the reverse.

Heal plants (Alteration) Reversible

Sphere: Plant

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 4

Area of Effect: 20' radius/level

Saving Throw: None

This spell heals all damage from fire, frost, cutting, trampling, parasites, mold, fungus, or disease on natural, non-monstrous living plants of up to Medium size within the area of effect. The spell purges all parasites and disease so that they cause no further damage, either to the plants themselves or to grazing animals. The spell does not heal large trees. It does not restore any growth that has actually been destroyed, nor can it counteract the effects of poor soil or lack of water.

Alternatively, the druid can cast the spell and touch a single plantlike monster to heal it of 1d8+2 hit points of damage. Touching such a creature—even green slime or yellow mold—to discharge the spell does the caster no harm.

The reversed spell, *harm plants*, leaves affected vegetation wilted and unproductive for the remainder of the growing season, or does 1d8+2 points of damage to a plantlike monster. Druids must be very careful with the reversed version of this spell. Mistletoe is required for either version of the spell.

Ripen (Alteration)

Sphere: Plant

Range: 5 yards

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Instantaneous

Casting Time: 4

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

Ripen affects either a single mature tree or all smaller plants covering a 10' square plot of ground. It causes the affected plants to immediately produce the normal amount of fruit (nuts, seeds, or whatever) they bear at the height of the harvest season. Thus, an apple tree will be laden with ripe apples, a patch of grain will mature, etc. A given tree or area of ground can do this only once per season, and the spell will not work outside of the plant's normal growing season. Any produce not picked or harvested within 24 hours withers and dies. The material component is mistletoe.

Second-level spells

Firebreak (Alteration)

Sphere: Plant

Range: 10 yards/level

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 turn/level

Casting Time: 5

Area of Effect: 2,000 square feet/level

Saving Throw: None

Firebreak renders all living vegetation in the area, including plantlike monsters and animated plant life, immune to normal fire, and cuts all damage to such plants from magical fire in half. Dead plant matter in the area of effect can still burn, as can living plants moved outside the area. The spell does not function indoors or underground. The material component is a bit of charred wood.

Spring (Alteration)

Sphere: Elemental (Water)

Range: 3 yards/level

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Variable

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

The druid can use this spell to create a spring of water with a flow rate of 2 to 12 gallons a minute, depending on the relative dryness of the region. If the DM determines that underground water exists within range, it is detected and drawn to the surface at the spot chosen unless its path is blocked by solid rock. There is a delay of one round for every 10 feet the water must travel. In dry country, the spring flows for just 24 hours, and at lower rates. The material component is a small forked stick, which is thrust into the ground.

Third-level spells

Heal trees (Alteration) Reversible

Sphere: Plant

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 6

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

This spell affects either one tree or other plant per level of the caster, or a single plantlike monster. It heals normal plants of all damage and disease, and functions as a combination *cure disease* and *cure critical wounds* (restoring 3d8+3 hit points of damage) for plantlike monsters. All plants to be affected must be alive and, in the case of trees, standing. The reversed spell, *harm trees*, infects normal plants with a deadly blight that kills in one week, or causes 3d8+3 points of damage to a single plantlike monster. As with *fertility/sterility* and *heal/harm plants*, the caster is not harmed by touching the plant to discharge this spell. The material component is a few drops of sap from an oak or ash tree.

Insect ward (Abjuration)

Sphere: Animal

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 month/level

Casting Time: 1 turn

Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

The druid casts *insect ward* on the spell's material component, a pair of rune-carved wooden stakes. He then plants one of the stakes in the ground, walks up to 100 feet per level away, and plants the other stake. The spell forms an invisible, 30'-high barrier extending between the stakes along the path the druid walked. The barrier is 99% likely to cause a normal insect encountering it to turn and go in the opposite direction. If one or several barriers join to completely enclose an area, affected insects depart the area. Those insects trapped in the area become lethargic and slowly die off. While the spell remains, the warded area has only 1% of its normal insect population, which will affect the area's ecosystem as insects form a large portion of many creatures' diets. Details of this are left to the DM.

By means of the runes carved into the stakes, the druid determines what types of insects the spell excludes. This can be specific (e.g., only mosquitoes and aphids) or general (e.g., all plant-eaters, or all blood-drinkers). Giant insects are unaffected, as are magically summoned or controlled insects. The stakes radiate magic until the spell ends. If either stake is removed from the ground, even for a

moment, the spell is broken.

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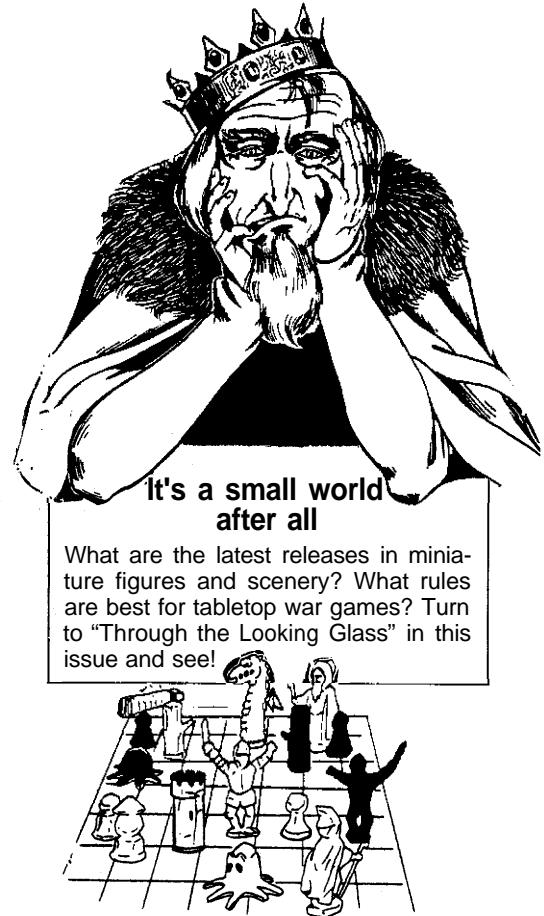
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The Game Wizards

Oh, no—it's the 1993 TSR™ collector cards!

by Thomas M. Reid

When I took over the reins of the TSR Fantasy Collector Cards from my co-worker and good friend David Wise, I foresaw this moment quite well. David, the trading-card guru at TSR, had warned me of just what I was getting into and how I'd feel when I got to the point of writing this article about them. He told me about the art orders, the encyclopedic card texts, getting all the right information to the right people, and so on. What I'd envisioned at that moment when I donned the mantle of trading-card czar was only half right. The part that I couldn't get a proper feel for was the wondrous sense of satisfaction. There was no way David could convey to me just how gratifying it'd be to finally see all of those characters, magical items, and monsters in complete, printed form.

As of this writing, I've just gotten hold of my editor's complete set of the first batch of cards, including all of the rare ones—my prize for painstakingly getting all the cards ready to go (for all you collectors out there who will be forced to put together a set the hard way, get to it, because you're not getting mine!). I'm just now putting the finishing touches on batch number two, scheduled to hit the stores in May, so I still have quite a bit of work to do.

Nonetheless, I breathed a sigh of contentment when I saw the finished product for the first time. Sure, they're a lot like any other product that I've edited since coming on board here at TSR, but there's a slightly different quality about them, something that you can never fully appreciate unless you've done them. It is, perhaps, similar to the feeling you'll get when you finally get that last card to complete your set. With that glimpse into the creation of the cards finished, let me tell you what's in them.

What stayed the same?

We knew we wanted to keep many of the features that worked well in the previous sets, both because you the collector told us that you liked them, and because we wanted to maintain a sense of continuity with the cards. As a result, very little has changed with the presentation. We still have the same icons, the text is still presented in the same manner, and the thin border is gold again to show that the card is a collector version and not from the silver-bordered factory set. In addition, we gave you the characters, mon-

sters, and magical items that we know you liked. We altered the effects of the magical items, because many of you claimed that you loved those from last year. We did some nine-card mini-series again, and this time we even numbered them properly so that they all fall on the same nine-pocket protector page. (That little piece of knowledge we picked up on after many of you set us straight—before that, we had no idea why other collector cards presented mini-series in sets of nine; we thought it was simply a number picked out of thin air! As you can see, we're still learning as we go along, so please be patient with us.)

We drew upon as much of the existing art that had been produced for other products since the 1992 set was designed, but that still left the majority of the cards needing brand-new art. So, like last year, you're getting a lot of art made especially for the collector cards, and I'm really excited about what was done. I think you'll be pleased with the art this year.

What's new for 1993?

First, and probably most importantly, we changed the way we numbered the cards. Instead of simply



labeling the cards 1,2,3, etc., we divided them into two groups—regular cards and rare ones. There are 495 regular cards, numbered "1 of 495," "2 of 495," etc., and 60 rare ones numbered "1 of 60," "2 of 60," and so forth. Now you can look at the card number and know immediately whether it's rare or not. We reduced the total number of cards down from 750 to 555, because many of you told us that 700+ cards were just too many to attempt to collect. We also decided to have three releases of cards instead of two this year, so there wouldn't be so many cards that you had to grab at one time. Thus, each release of cards will have all of the rare ones available, and 165 (one-third) of the 495 regular ones. One thing to keep in mind is that the factory set that will appear in November of this year will *not* contain the 60 rare cards. If you want to get every one of the cards, you're going to have to buy foil packs and collect gold-bordered cards!

Second, the other major change we made came as a result of problems we heard about from all who tried to get complete sets of cards. Last year, certain card numbers could not be found in certain regions of the country because they had been shipped to other areas. This year, we've gone to a hand-sorting method to eliminate some of that. It's more expensive on our end, but we're doing it because we want you to be satisfied with the card-collection process.

Beyond those two major changes, which were made for serious reasons, we made some other "fun" changes. We added more foil cards (there's a mini-series of them), two cards that are actually stickers, and a very cool lenticular card (that's a "prism" card).



for those of us who still get excited when we find them in a box of cereal). These are all part of the rare set, which has been printed in full color on *both* sides of the card, not just on the art side. We decided to change the color of the border in order

to make this year's set distinctive from the last two, so instead of black you'll find that the cards have a blue-green border. We also changed the appearance and dimensions of the box slightly.

We also did something that is going to

Regular cards

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add a whole new twist to collecting these cards. For the *regular* cards only, we had a smaller print run made that has a bright red border instead of the gold border. There are red-bordered versions of every regular card out there, but there's just not as many—about one for every 12 of the gold kind, in fact. What this means is there are two ways to collect the cards now. You can still put together a full set of gold-bordered cards, but if you're seriously collecting, you can try to get a complete set of the cards with a red border on them. Remember, though, that only the regular cards have the red borders—the rare cards are already hard enough to get hold of without making an even smaller quantity of them red!

I said that the ratio of red- to gold-bordered cards is 1:12, and that the box dimensions had changed. There's a reason for this. This year, there are only 12 cards in a foil pack, as opposed to the 16 we've had the last two years. There are still 36 foil packs in a box, but the box is obviously going to be a bit flatter. Now, even though you're still going to have to pay a dollar for one foil pack or \$36 for an entire box of them, there are fewer cards to collect overall, so you won't have to spend as much money to get a complete set. With that in mind, the 1:12 ratio was done specifically so that there would be one red-bordered card in every foil pack, or 36 in a box. As a side note, there should be about one rare card for every *two* foil packs, or 18 in a box. Even though we're having them hand-sorted this

year, there's still no guarantee

that every foil pack will have one red-bordered card. Still, it will average out to that.

Other things to know

Whenever we undertake a project of this magnitude with this many different elements, there are bound to be oddities and difficulties along the way. We don't like them and we certainly try as hard as we can to avoid them, but they still manage to rear their ugly heads now and then. One such problem has appeared in this year's release of cards. Part of the rare set of cards have no numbers on them. We still aren't sure whether this was an oversight on our part or if the printer forgot to include them in a printing set-up, but it doesn't change the fact that they exist. Unfortunately, since the entire set of rare cards has already been printed (we're just waiting to put them into releases #2 and #3), they're not going to be corrected. The cards are: Two rogues as part of a create-your-own mini-series (#52 & #53), a psionicist in the create your own mini-series (#54), Miguel Hernando del la Montoya (#55), High Princess Alicia Kendrick (#56), Prince Brandon Olaffson (#57), Myrmeen Lhal (#58), and Artus Cimber (#59). Of course, if you get the rare cards checklist, these will be listed with their numbers on it for reference; this list is for those of you who don't get one.

I'm sure, too, that there will be other mistakes that you will find as you vigilantly collect all the cards. As much as I would like it to be otherwise, it's simply impossible to put out a perfect set of cards. Still, they are a lot of fun to collect, and the unusual cases where cards are missing something or have a mistake usually wind up being very valuable. I certainly don't think that they detract enough from the fun of putting together a set to make it not worthwhile to you, and I hope you feel the same way.

So, that's it. Now all there is left for you to do (if you haven't already) is begin collecting them. I'm waiting with more than a little eagerness to see how you receive this year's set. Before I wrap this up though, I want to thank David for all of his input for the 1993 set. It was his trial by fire that set the stage for me to run the next leg of the race, and I greatly appreciate all of the wisdom he provided that

helped me to avoid pitfalls. A special thanks goes out to all of my gaming friends; the members of the Alliance of Defiance and the Companions of Vexter, Master of Illusion (he walks the planes like most men walk to their mailboxes), are now immortalized forever. And, of course, *all* the people here at TSR who put time and effort into some portion of the cards deserve a nod. These cards aren't easy to produce, and everybody did a great job.

Thanks, gang.



Finally, I want to send out a hearty "Thank You!" to all of you out there eagerly collecting the cards. Without your continued input, we wouldn't learn from our mistakes and be able to make a better batch of cards. Keep sending us those letters. I want to hear from you, whether you like the cards, hate them, or just like using stamps and licking envelopes. You can write to me at the following address:

Thomas M. Reid
("Trading Card Czar" is optional)
c/o TSR, Inc.
P.O. Box 756

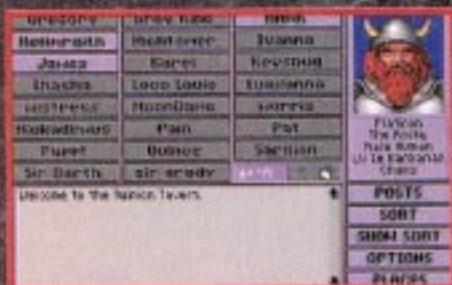
Good luck in your collecting.



The numbers printed in bold here are the cards that were specially printed—the lenticular card, the foil cards, and the sticker cards

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This is in response to the letter from Jackson Caskey in issue #183. The following tactics may seem heavy handed. However, in the situation described, they may be necessary.

1. *Change genre/game systems:* Try to find a game system where gaining money is not the object, such as most super-hero games and the STAR TREK® and STAR WARS® RPGs. Some of these systems and their accompanying universes have standards of conduct that are inherent in the world concept. Even if a group of supers decides to rob banks, the problems they face in doing so may cause some character development. The STAR TREK game universe is even better for this, as the characters, in addition to having a standard of behavior, don't handle money at all.

2. *Declare world catastrophe:* Some disaster has occurred and none of the previous plants, animals, races, cities, magical items, etc., have survived. Make the players (no longer using their original characters but some mutation thereof) discover the new world. This has an advantage in that the players can no longer rattle off the abilities of any given monster or magical item, while letting you use a system whose rules everyone knows. The disadvantage is that you have to entirely repopulate the world with unique beings. (If you need help with this, use the races and monsters out of the TALISLANTA® game from Wizards of the Coast for ideas.)

3. *Play only concept characters:* When rolling up characters, don't roll dice. Have each player explain in detail a character's concept. Ask each player questions such as "What does he do in his spare time?" and "What does she think is funny?" Also, have the player write up a 1-2 page history covering the character's origin story (not to include grandiose previous adventures). Then you, not the players, make up the characters' statistics and skills. There is nothing wrong with pulling numbers out of thin air; they do not have to have rolled on dice to be valid.

4. *Keep all character sheets between games:* Also keep an up-to-date second copy of everyone's character sheet. Let them know that if an item isn't on your copy, the character doesn't have it.

If these suggestions don't work, I'm left with the conclusion that your players don't want to game, they want a personalized power trip, and you should find new players.

Karen Remick
Milwaukee WI

This is in response to Jackson Caskey's letter in issue #183. The problems he is experiencing are all too common. Anal-retentive number-crunching and whining about statistics have been features of role-playing games since the inception of the hobby. If finding another group of gamers is impractical or impossible and the current group refuses to change willingly, there is no other option than to force a change in their behavior.

After years of gaming with power gamers who design characters expressly devoted to dominating the party, and after witnessing the untimely character deaths associated with this mindset, I have decided that such things will not occur in any game I run. I have noticed that players spend too much time thinking about their character statistics and not enough time thinking about character motivation and goals; this leads to dry, soulless sessions punctuated by arguing and bad feelings. There must be a way to prevent this syndrome while encouraging role-playing and guaranteeing fun.

Toward this end, I have devised a system that renders the players unable to brood over statistics of any sort. After all, are any of the statistics actually needed by the players? No. The AD&D® game and all other RPGs are geared so that imagination is the most important tool involved in play. Players should not be concerned with lists of numbers. The DM has the job of knowing all this stuff but should be less concerned with absolutes than the running of the game. Simply do not allow the players access to any of the numbers that they do not need to see, which is all of them, in my opinion. Strength, Intelligence, hit points, level, armor class, spells per day, and experience points can all be kept for the DM's eyes only. Keep all of the character information on one piece of paper, one line per character, and keep that paper in easy view. For hit-point loss, use an index card and mark off the damage as you roll it while giving the players a descriptive account of the wound ("Just a scratch" or "He hit you solidly in the ribs with that mace, and you don't have much fight left"), letting the player decide whether or not to continue, basing the decision on character motivation rather than on a calculation of current hit points vs. what kind of damage the foe could cause.

Before the start of a campaign, query the players as to which kind of character they would most like to play; then generate that character yourself and give the player a descriptive

account of the characters' abilities. For example: "Wilhelm was the strongest one in his village, and he had a genuine ability to set people at ease even if he was as dumb as a stump." That description gives you the idea that Wilhelm is above average in Strength (perhaps as high as 18), has a good Charisma (maybe a 13 or 14), and has an Intelligence in the mid-single-digits. Any good player will take that thumbnail sketch and turn it into a character that will generate stories and fun for years. If you desire, throw in some background that the character has, being careful not to add motivations or outlooks, for those are the domain of the player. Also leave to the player gender, height, weight, and personality decisions. In place of a character sheet, have the players keep a log of what their characters have done, who they have met, goals, eccentricities, enemies, and so forth.

The benefits of this system (in no particular order) are:

1. There's no lengthy start-up time on the first day of the campaign.
2. New people need not learn a complicated set of rules in order to start playing.
3. The DM has total control over what powers and abilities the characters have and can include latent abilities as well.
4. It encourages role-playing by forcing a player to rely totally on intangibles to determine the character's character.
5. Players are never sure of their characters' limits, thus inspiring thoughtful reactions to stressful situations.
6. By keeping logbooks, the players continuously record the history of the campaign, making for good reading later on.
7. Players cannot cheat. (Although if they try, they only hurt themselves in the long run.)
8. This inhibits envy other players may feel about another's character statistics or abilities.

Certainly, harried and hard-pressed DMs do not need more work bogging them down, but this system pays off by lifting the game from the realm of numbers up to the realm of imagination, where it belongs.

Of course, if this seems to be too much work, just keep the character sheets after each gaming session, thereby preventing clandestine alterations.

Warren Tilson
Torrance CA

I am writing in response to Jackson Caskey's letter in issue #183, in hopes that I might have some helpful suggestions. As a player, I was also plagued by many of the problems you have been having in your campaign. I played in a game (you couldn't call it a campaign) where every session included a battle against a combination of goblins, ogres, and hill giants—pure hack and slash. In another "campaign" of tremendous Monty Haul proportions, my PC walked into a treasure room that, along with many magical weapons, included some gauntlets of ogre power, a vampiric sword, and magical elven chain mail! And this was a first-level character! Finally, I played in a game where I began as a first-level dwarf fighter/cleric, and in less than three hours I was 4th level in both classes. This was after defeating two white dragons and eight hill giants. Enough was enough! I started my own campaign, and it has been very successful.

My first suggestion for you is to start over. Have all of your players roll up new characters, start them at 1st level, then have a copy of each character for yourself. This would eliminate mysteri-

ous jumps in ability scores and hit-point totals. One thing I do to eliminate min/maxing and the tendency toward a totally demihuman party is to have players roll up two sets of statistics in the AD&D 2nd Edition games order, and have them choose one of these. If the player wants to be a human, he can rearrange his statistics; otherwise, he must stick with what he rolled. This promotes role-playing, greatly eliminates super characters, and increases the number of humans in your party. My campaign currently has one halfling, one elf, and five humans!

To suppress Monty Haul gaming, have story goals that produce no monetary rewards. Have only one magical item be attained every three or four sessions, and have that item be a sword +1 or a potion of healing, something minor until the characters reach higher levels. Also, have treasure be small and difficult to find.

I try to run my campaign like a good fantasy novel, to include adversity, hardships, and setbacks, a little reward, then more adversity hardships, and setbacks. The players must be trained to their new way of life.

Low-level campaigns seem to require more role-playing, so to slow level progression I do not give Individual Class Award experience. I give experience for role-playing, cooperation, fun, and completion of the story goal. The amount given for killing monsters is only about 30% of the total.

Another way to produce role-playing is to not have any combat for a whole game session. Have the characters wander around a city or village, being told all kinds of information, until they're not sure where to go first. Have NPCs ask personal questions of the characters: Where were you born? How is your family? What brings you here? When the party begins its journey, have it be met by a wide variety of NPCs with many different personalities. Have an NPC decide to join the party and pester them with useless and perhaps amusing tall tales. Point out weird tracks that the party comes across, just to make the players nervous. Have a human mage, walking with a beefed-up hobgoblin, pass the characters on the road. If the party attacks, it would be killed easily; if it let them pass, there is another mystery to clear up. (Players learn a lot when their characters die.) By using these devices, a whole session can be easily used up, and the players can have a lot of fun. I use this technique each time I have a new player join the game, so he has no misconceptions of what our game is about. It's about role-playing!

If your players still don't respond, then I have two further suggestions. The first is to ask someone else to DM for a while and become a player. Perhaps as a player you could show the others how fun actual role-playing can be.

The other suggestion is to look for others who would be interested in the type of game you hope to have. I have friends who complained that they were getting no response from notes at the local hobby store. I put up my note, and the response was so tremendous that I had to turn people away! I have seven players currently, and actually have a waiting list for those who wish to join if someone leaves. What caught these gamers eyes was the sentence: "Games will be geared toward a slow level progression, and will emphasize *heroic role-playing*." Gamers are starving for real role-playing!

I hope these suggestions are helpful to you, and the best of luck to you and your players.

Randy Hunt
Colorado Springs CO

In reply to Jackson Caskey's letter in issue #183, I offer the following advice as a player and DM of five years:

1. Have the players create new characters, but make them use your dice. Use the 3d6 method, as there is much less chance of them having high statistics. PCs with maximum hit points at fifth level are extremely rare, but the whole group?

2. Talk to them. Find out why they think that characters with less than two attributes of 16 aren't worth playing, but don't be too stern—this is a game of fun!

3. Jackson's players sound like the dreaded "power gamers" who can ruin everybody's games from time to time. Everyone enjoys the amassing of wealth and power to a lesser extent, though.

4. The DARK SUN™ world would be excellent for showing your players another facet of role-playing. Wealth is nothing on Athas—survival is another matter. Gold is the least of anyone's problems when they're thirsty, hungry, and lost in the desert.

5. Magical items: If in doubt, leave 'em out! Make magical items very rare—the PCs will begin to appreciate even the humble dagger +1. Magic would feel more "magical" as a result. You could even make items that function like artifacts, with all the negative results as well.

6. If the PCs want a Monty Haul adventure, give it to them, and have them battle a monster that takes a good deal of magical hardware to take out. Create a creature that might fulfill these requirements, one that could take a lot of gold to find.

7. Jackson could explain to his players that he's unhappy with their playing style. Players take this better when individually spoken to.

8. If his players don't improve, he could find another group he can share his ideas with—but shouldn't necessarily give up on the old players. If he finds an accomplished role-player, perhaps through his local game shop, then this role-player could show the other players what to aspire to.

9. Jackson must remember that the idea of the AD&D game (or any other RPG for that matter) is that it should be fun for both the players and the DM.

Bill Heron
Curie, Midlothian, Scotland

I am writing this letter to address the problem of super characters in the AD&D game. I believe that some of the characters in my area would make a "normal" Monty Haul campaign's look like wimps. One thing that may make these PCs unique, though, is the fact that most of them gained this status because of rules and dice worship. (Note: I have DMed this group only once, and I play with it only occasionally.)

In this campaign, the fighter is the most powerful class, because of the rules introduced in PHBR1 *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*. The PCs have incredible statistics that exceed racial limits, and everyone takes specialization, two-weapon style, and ambidexterity proficiencies if possible. One player has two characters in the same campaign, and both are fighters. One of them, a 10th-level centaur fighter, has an incredible THAC0, and his damage rolls are: 1d8+15d8+15d6+20d6+20. He was able to kill eight stone giants in three or four rounds with only the support of a dual-classed fighter/mage who cast *fireball* in the first round. The other, a 10th-level half-elven fighter-cavalier, was able to kill a 190-hp psionic lich with one attack in

the game I DMed, because of a special sword he had that would kill a chaotic-evil character if it failed a saving throw. Looking back on this, I think I should have cheated, but if I had, the players probably would have jumped all over me because, with a few exceptions, these guys are "rules lawyers."

Another problem in these games is treasure. The DMs follow the dice exactly when rolling for treasure. This is fine in the beginning, but when the characters have treasures that include nearly infinitely many suits of red dragon armor (AC -3, and some PCs are bringing back better suits), plenty of magical weapons, and millions of gold pieces, something needs to be done.

I have three suggestions for groups that are experiencing similar problems:

1. Don't follow the dice rolls to the letter when making random rolls for treasure. If your PCs have too much money, give them the minimum listed or even lower. If magical items are the problem, give out only one or two per large encounter, and don't hesitate to make the items cursed. It might help to make up your own items, since players don't always hesitate to buy the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

2. Give out experience based on the challenge of the encounter. If a PC is able to defeat a white dragon in one round in one-on-one combat because of luck and magical weapons, don't give him or her the full listed XP value.

3. Don't allow every optional rule, class, or spell into your campaign if you think it might be unbalancing, no matter what the players say or do. Remember that you are the DM, and the key word in all these rules is *optional*.

As a final note, if you think a game run by someone else is having problems like this, don't be surprised if the DM denies it. I have spoken to the regular DM of the campaign I mentioned about this, and he claims the reason it isn't Monty Haul is because players are "earning" the stuff. I'm not sure, but I don't think killing dragons in one round counts as earning their treasure.

I welcome your comments on this issue. You can write to me at:

Matt Martin
360 Old Territorial Rd.
Chatfield MN 55923

I'm writing in response to a letter sent by Jackson Caskey, from Marshfield, Wis., that appeared in issue #183's "Forum." I've been role-playing seven years now, and in those years I have met some tough customers. You know, the 18-in-every-score guys, those who wield +5 swords almost from their first adventure and can recite the entire magical items list, with explanations, forward and backward. Still, I think I can deal with them rather nicely, Dungeon Masterly speaking. I hope the next pieces of advice help solve your problems.

In your letter, you said you even watched while your players rolled up their scores. That's good, but it's not enough. This idea takes a little more of your time, but you'll soon see it's worth it. Make a DM's player-character sheet, with the things a DM needs to know about a PC, such as scores, alignment, magical items, hit points, level, experience points, and proficiencies. These can be made any size you like (I made them on little pieces of paper about 6' x 4'). Fill them when the players create their PCs, show them to everyone, and never leave them lying around. When an adventure starts, check the players' sheets with your own and modify any-



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thing if necessary. If someone complains, simply show him your card and he'll stop complaining for sure. Also, when the adventure ends, put on your sheet all changes, such as level, hit points, used-up magical items or charges, etc. This method has been proven to completely annihilate a player who cheats with his sheet.

Then come magical items. The "cursed magical item" scheme almost always works. One cheating player of mine had his PC killed by a *necklace of strangulation*. If the players know every cursed item or can pay to *identify* it, make new ones or variations to normal magical items (such as a *rope of constriction* that attacks the user, or a *wand of fireballs* that throws a fireball at the caster). If you can't come up with many, my big brother will be more than happy to help you (his cursed magical items are too cruel even for me, and I'm regarded as a tough DM!).

There is another thing you can try that I picked up from an issue of DUNGEON® Adventures. While the PCs are asleep, have a thief rob them blind! If the PCs leave a guard each night, have the thief use sleeping powder, a *cloak* or *boots of elvenkind*, or something like that. You get the idea. This also works for money and treasure. So what if their bags will yell and wake them when the thief takes the loot? Just as the thief makes his getaway, a vicious troll pops out of nowhere, blocking the PCs. Imagine the PCs confronting a troll without their much-loved and used magical items! It's an interesting thought.

Now let's talk treasure. While the aforementioned thief scheme works for money and treasure the PCs carry, it doesn't cover the loot PCs may have elsewhere. Still, this money is far easier to get at with the absence of the PCs. The smart PC has his money in a bank? Too bad, it was robbed last week. The other PC hid or buried his loot somewhere "secret"? Oops, he missed the stealthy thief who observed him while he hid the treasure. He has his gold in the king's vault? Drat! Those pesky goblins had to be driven away, and his funds were used for that goal. After all, he's a good guy, so it doesn't matter (or does it?). I'm sure you can think of more "incidents" to make the PCs lose money fast.

Finally, we come down to role-playing. I've encountered players who see their PCs as a stack of scores that help hack and slash the monster, instead of as another "you," an alter-ego that acts, thinks, and lives. One thing that doesn't help is the XP system standard for AD&D and D&D® games, because they're based on the killing factor. I also play RPGs from Palladium Books and I find its experience system ideal for role-playing, and it doesn't obstruct combat. I'm not telling you to use the Palladium experience system, but to use a similar system, such as the optional system found on the AD&D 2nd Edition *DMG*, page 48. If you don't like it, you can always modify it or enhance it to your liking. It will make the PCs role-play more, in order to contribute ideas and to use proficiencies and abilities scores for noncombat purposes. The first time I used it, everyone liked it except for one player who didn't role-play. Know how many XPs he got? Twenty-five. That's right, 25. From that day on, everyone gave ideas, was anxious to use skills, and role-plays as though his experience points depend on it (they do).

One final point to consider. The tips given above are designed to stop cheaters dead in their tracks and are not for everyday use. They may work to your liking, but some cheaters may feel offended or downright furious. Some

players may even stop role-playing (the player whose PC was killed by the necklace and the one who got 25 XP left my campaign). Still, I don't think all of them will leave you. Instead, they'll choose to stop cheating (I play with an average group of six, and we don't miss the other two guys). If they do leave, this will surely prove that they were not taking the game as it was, but in a twisted form that is a nightmare to all DMs worldwide. After all, if you didn't have fun before, and now *they* don't have fun, I think it's justice. And it's easy to find more gamers, even if they do not live on the same block, in the same city, or country.

Jorge Hernandez Cid
Mexicali, Mexico

I am writing in response to Frederic Bush's letter (in issue #186) concerning the "grim spectre of discrimination" he has encountered at several conventions. After reading his letter, I feel he has misunderstood the intentions of the convention organizers but has not been the victim of a grand plot.

The conventions he attended, in trying to be socially responsible, wanted to restrict access by younger gamers, those they viewed as "not mature" (admittedly a bad choice of word—read "minor"), to gaming situations that parents and outside groups might find objectionable or harmful. Their intentions were good. They were trying to police themselves in much the same way as the movie and record industries do. Unfortunately, their methods are often misunderstood by those they are trying to protect.

Frederic feels that he is, in fact, "mature" enough to handle these situations as presented in a gaming environment. Maybe. But asking the staff of a large convention to make judgments as to who is "mature" enough would be an impossible task, both in terms of time and manpower. It is much easier to use the distinction society has adopted: Those over age 18 are "mature," while those under are not.

I realize that this situation may be viewed as inherently unfair to some, but would it not be more unfair to the rest of the people attending to eliminate these sessions completely, or to cancel the convention because a parental group is upset by the contents of the games their kids are playing and has threatened legal action?

I don't necessarily agree with these restrictions, but I understand why they are sometimes used. I also don't feel that the people who put a great deal of time into organizing these events should be maligned in this way. There is no "obvious discrimination" against gamers of younger ages, and there is no conspiracy to deprive them of the enjoyment of role-playing games. There are, however, some who would deprive the rest of us our right to enjoy these games in the name of protecting the young. If we have to compromise on the issue, this appears to be the best way available.

Ed Pflager
Toledo OH

I am writing in response to the letter by Frederic Bush in issue #186, in which he discussed age discrimination at gaming conventions. He mentioned the "mature gamers only" policy that he encountered at UBCON '92 as a specific example. I want to thank him for bringing this to our attention.

I wish to explain the origin of the policy. The "mature gamers only" policy was initiated three years ago at the first UBCON and has been continued since. It was originally intended as

advice to gamers and especially to parents of gamers that some events may be unsuitable for young people. This was done to provide information to those who may have brought especially young gamers to the convention. It was also done to protect the University of Buffalo and the Strategists and Role-Players Association from liability if some parent became upset because a child heard graphic violence or adult themes at our convention and decided to register a complaint with the university. Therefore, we allowed game masters to check a box on their event-description forms if they thought that their event would be "for mature gamers only." At UBCON '92, we had 20 of the 114 events in the convention booklet so listed, mostly games that were set in a horror genre.

The club was created to serve the interests of all area gamers, so the *club* has no policy of restricting convention attendants on the basis of age. All tournaments at UBCON were open to all ages. Anyone could run an event at the convention, regardless of age. I know there were young gamers that ran events, and we were happy to have them participate with the convention. This past year's convention (1992) was the first that a definite age (17) was listed as a minimum required to play an event.

I consulted a legal service and found that the policy is legitimate. However, this policy does not serve the interests of younger, experienced gamers like Mr. Bush, who is obviously not going to start litigation based on the content of a role-playing game. In our litigation-filled world, it is unfortunate that the policy has to be considered.

In hindsight, one can see the difficulty of enforcing such a policy, and I know that some age-limited events were attended by minors. Since we are interested in letting a convention run unfettered and with greatest access to all, we are going to let the game masters who suggest the "mature gamers only" status for their event be given the freedom to allow players who are minors, but who are obviously familiar with the genre or style of play, into their event. A paragraph in both the registration packet and the on-site booklet will describe the "mature gamers only" identification as a recommendation rather than a restriction. This way, parents of especially young gamers can be informed, and those seriously interested can still attend such events.

Thomas M. Heckmann
Treasurer—UB SARPA

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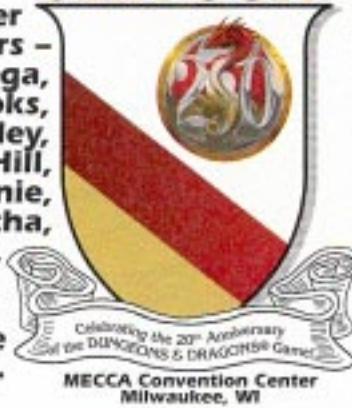
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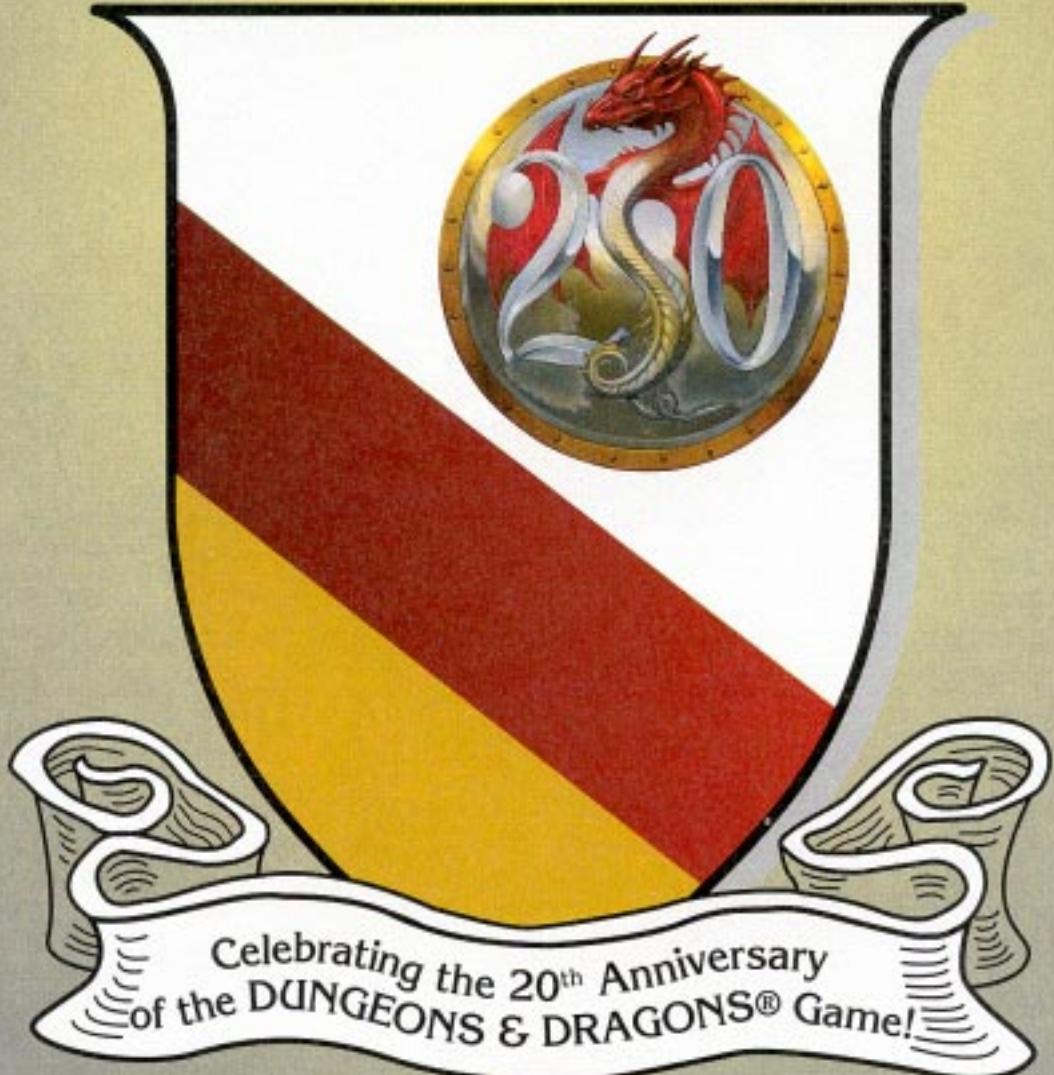
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Get ready—here comes the 1993 GEN CON® Game Fair!

by Tom McLaughlin

Join 18,000 dedicated gamers at the 1993 GEN CON® Game Fair, coming August 19-22 at the MECCA Convention Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Sponsored by TSR, Inc., this is the world's largest game convention. It features four days of frenzied gaming in almost a dozen different categories. This includes over 1,000 military, strategy, board, miniatures, role-playing, computer, video, arcade, virtual reality and multiplayer networked games! In fact, the 1993 Game Fair features over 500 role-playing game events, 30 major RPG tournaments, and \$10,000 in prizes.

This year's convention unveils many firsts. It's highlighted by an expanded strategy board-game track with special guest, Rich Berg. Also featured is a fantastic virtual reality, computer, and arcade gaming arena. We'll also have Science-Fiction Saturday, with one of the stars of the original *Star Trek* TV series as our special guest, George Takei.

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What else will be going on? We'll have hundreds of tournaments and prizes; veterans know the GEN CON Game Fair is the place to win awards. This year we're topping all previous conventions with more than \$10,000 in prize giveaways!

Out of hundreds of tournaments, some of the biggest ones will be the Avalon Hill Classics Open, the AD&D® Open, RPGA™ Network events, MIDIMAZE*, MONOPOLY*, and the BATTLETECH* Miniatures Open. Don't miss the 15-mm WRG Ancients and Puffing Billy tournaments, the Games Magazine Triathlon, MYTHOS* Virtual Reality Shootout, RUBOUT*, the 13th Annual Miniatures Painting Competition, and STAR FLEET BATTLES* games!

Board games

In the board-game arena, special guest Rich Berg is the designer of more than 30 historical simulations, including the TERRIBLE SWIFT SWORD, WAR OF THE RING*, SOUTH MOUNTAIN*, and BLACKBEARD* games, and the GREAT BATTLES OF HISTORY* series. The board-game program includes four days of military, strategy, and historical gaming events and a series of exciting War College seminars. Meet Frank Chadwick, Larry Bond, Lou Zocchi, Professor Harry Deutsch (Paris OSS), Major David Wesley, and Major Matthew Caffrey (USAF Air War College).

The Avalon Hill Open Tournament includes: FORTRESS EUROPA*, PANZER LEADER*, PANZERGRUPPE GUDERIAN*,

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Miniatures

The Game Fair also features a fantastic miniatures gaming track hosted by the Historical Miniatures Gaming Society and the Gamemasters Guild of Waukegan. Hundreds of science-fiction, fantasy, and historical miniatures and board-game events will be held. Highlights include the annual 15-mm WRG Ancients Tournament; a four-day, 300-person, 15-mm BATTLESYSTEM™ Feature Tournament, and the annual BATTLETECH Open.

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The 1993 GEN CON Game Fair is the game event of the year! Grab your friends, and join the world's best gamers at the world's best convention. There's something for everybody! Daily fees are just \$5 for spectators and \$10 for players.

In the next issue of DRAGON Magazine, we'll unveil some secret Science-Fiction Saturday events, virtual reality games, the seminar schedule, and the convention celebrity line-up. Join us for more!

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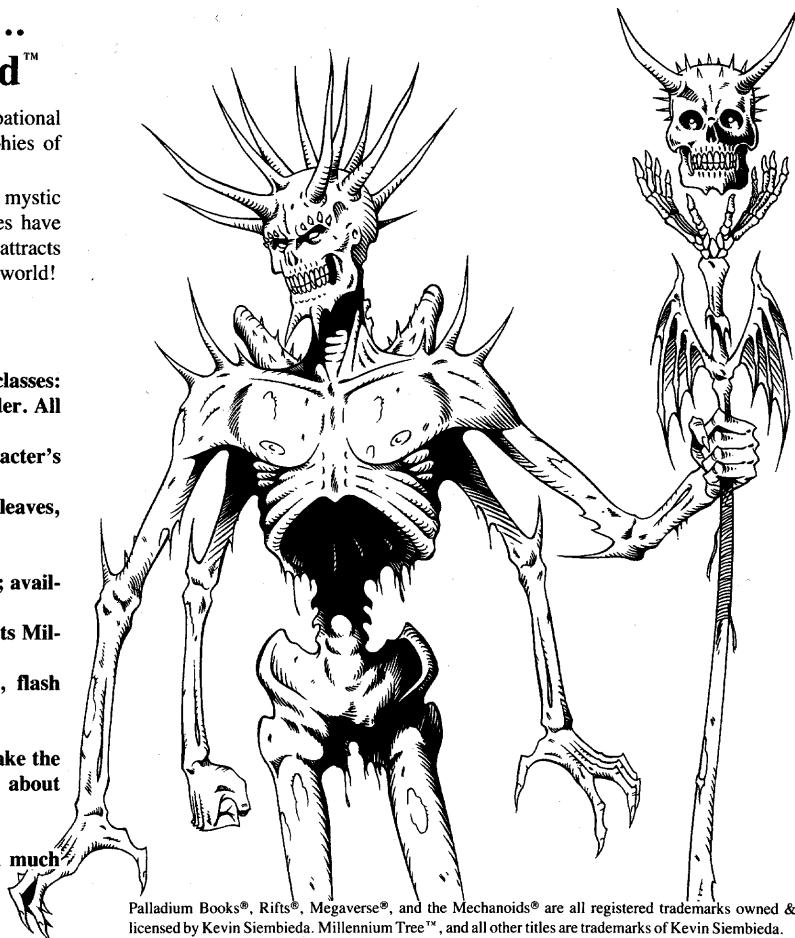
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SAGE advice

by Skip Williams

If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., "Sage Advice" will answer them. In the United States and Canada, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. We are no longer able to make personal replies; please send no SASEs with your questions (SASEs are being returned with writer's guidelines for the magazine).

This month, the sage looks at the ins and outs of combat in the AD&D® game, briefly considers a few matters from the D&D® game, and weighs the prospects for aspiring gaming professionals.

Are the defensive bonuses a character gets for cover or concealment cumulative with bonuses for Dexterity or magic? Are defensive bonuses for cover and concealment cumulative with each other?

The rules don't have anything to say about Dexterity bonuses and cover or concealment. To preserve game balance, I suggest that you don't add Dexterity bonuses to modifiers for cover. This prevents characters with high Dexterity scores from becoming virtually immune to missile attacks when they take cover. From the game-logic standpoint, defensive Dexterity adjustments represent an active defense. The character moves in a way that helps defeat attacks. A character hunkered down behind cover is not free to make such movements; a character who is claiming more than 50% cover or concealment probably cannot even see attacks coming and, consequently, cannot respond to them.

One could make the same game-balance argument about combining magical defensive adjustments with cover, but the game logic doesn't hold up. Magical defensive bonuses function in a variety of ways, but they either make the protected character harder to hurt (by reinforcing armor, skin, and bone) or harder to hit (by

deflecting blows, deceiving the attacker, or just serendipitously arranging things in the defender's favor). Taking cover does not interfere with any of these.

Cover and concealment are never cumulative. "Cover" indicates that the character has found a barrier that can stop incoming attacks. Solid objects such as walls and boulders provide cover. "Concealment" is not sturdy enough to stop attacks, but it does help spoil an attacker's aim by hiding part of the character (this is why concealment is referred to as "soft cover" in the AD&D 2nd Edition game). Bushes, tall grass, and even hanging laundry can provide concealment. Note that cover, by its very nature, offers some concealment and the defensive modifiers for cover already take this into account.

Are defensive bonuses from Dexterity cumulative with a shield spell?

This is up to the DM. The discussion of cover and concealment above might lead you to conclude that Dexterity does not help characters using *shield* spells, since the spell description says the spell produces an "invisible barrier" in front of the caster. On the other hand, most DMs I know allow *shield* users the benefits from their Dexterity bonuses. This is because a *shield* spell provides a form of personal defense rather than a wall the character hides behind.

What magical protections, if any, are cumulative with a *shield* spell?

Protective items that grant a defensive bonus, such as rings and cloaks, are cumulative with a *shield* spell. Items that provide a basic armor class, such as armor and *bracers of defense*, are not. Note that shields are a type of armor, and hence belong to the latter category.

The description of the *spectral hand* spell says that the hand can be used to deliver "touch attack spells of fourth level or lower." Does this mean that a multi-classed cleric/wizard PC could not use *spectral hand* to deliver a cure

***light wounds* spell to a comrade?**

If you take the description literally, that's exactly what it means. In this interpretation, a *spectral hand* is strictly an instrument of combat and the magical channel between the caster and the *hand* can conduct only baneful magics. However, a DM could decide that "touch attack spells" means "touch-delivered spells." Game balance in your game probably won't suffer if you decide to let *spectral hand* work with all fourth level and lower spells with "touch" range.

In one of our game sessions, an NPC priest used a *word of recall* while a PC was on his back. As DM, I ruled that the priest and the PC both were transported back to the priest's sanctuary. Was I right?

You might have been right. Since the priest was not gagged, he could have completed the spell, which has a casting time of 1 and only a verbal component. (If the spell also had a somatic or material component or both, the PC on the priest's back would have prevented the casting. You just can't handle material components or complete somatic gestures while in the midst of a wrestling match.)

To reach a decision about this situation, you have to balance two conflicting premises: One, game balance absolutely requires that opponents have a chance to disrupt spells by interfering with the caster. Two, the *word of recall* spell is a powerful bit of magic that is especially designed to allow the priest to escape when the going gets rough.

Generally speaking, a character cannot complete a spell if she is hit by an attack or suffers damage during the casting process. However, just having something or somebody sitting on a spell-caster is not necessarily enough to break the character's concentration. If the PC were using the wrestling rules (DMG, page 59 or PH, page 97) and had achieved a hold that could be maintained from round to round, I would not allow the spell to be used—you can't concentrate on magic

when you're taking any kind of damage. If there was no hold, I'd go to the initiative dice, if the priest wasn't taking damage and beat the PC on initiative, I'd let the spell work. If the priest lost initiative, and the PC made any kind of successful attack, the spell would be ruined and be gone from the priest's memory. In any case, If the priest successfully cast the spell, I'd let the priest choose whether to take the PC along. If the priest did try to take the PC along, you'd need to check the priest's weight limit; if the PC and all the priest's equipment exceeded the weight limit, the spell would fail and the priest would be stuck. Note that, as I mentioned earlier, a gag would prevent the priest from using the spell no matter what was happening—no speech, no verbal component and no spell.

What is padded leather armor? This armor type is mentioned in table 29 of the *PH* (page 39) but isn't described anywhere else. Padded armor is described on page 75, but isn't mentioned in table 29. Can thieves wear padded armor?

The reference to "padded leather" in table 29 is an error that has been corrected in recent printings of the *PH*. Yes, thieves can wear padded armor, though its bulk tends to get in the way. If you own an older book, change the final heading in table 29 to read: "Padded or Studded Leather." Neither of these armor types are particularly well suited to thieving.

Page 186 of the *DMG* says that a *vorpal blade* can sever an opponent's neck on a modified die roll of 20-23. What happens when the modified roll is higher than 23?

You seem to have overlooked the footnote that goes with the table in the item description. The footnote says that only the sword's +3 bonus is considered when calculating the score to sever. Therefore, no score higher than 23 possible—bonuses from strength, specialization, etc. don't apply for this particular purpose. That is, the attack roll must be an unmodified 17 or better before there is a chance to sever a neck (the chance can drop depending on the target's size and construction). Note also that the attack must hit. If a roll of 17 or better is a miss, there is no damage inflicted and nothing is severed.

Do all giant-sized humanoid monsters suffer a -4 attack penalty on gnomes and dwarves, or just the creatures listed in the race descriptions from the *PH*? Dwarven and gnomish NPCs in some modules are listed as having a defensive bonus vs. "giant-type" creatures. However, gnolls and bugbears, which have penalties to attack gnomes, according to the *PH*, are only size Large.

Just for the record, trolls are size Large, too. Gnomes and dwarves have a racial ability to avoid attacks from the creatures specifically listed in the *PH*, not against all humanoid creatures above a certain size. Note, however, that many kinds of creatures generally qualify as giants. These include ettins, formorians, verbeeg, and lots of others. Most of these creatures appear under the term "giant-kin" in the various *Monstrous Compendiums*. The term "giant-type creatures" you see in NPC descriptions is just a form of shorthand. It does not mean, for example, that dwarves and gnomes get defensive bonuses vs. extra-large iron golems, King-Kong-sized giant apes, or other massive creatures with humanoid shapes.

When using the "Hovering at death's door" optional rule from the *DMG*, would a character who is revived after being reduced to fewer than zero hit points be unable to use granted priest powers such as the cleric's undead turning and the druid's *shapechange* for a full day?

Being returned from death's door is a taxing experience. A character who has gone through this ordeal is a temporary invalid; he is barely able to move, much less cast spells, use granted powers, fight, or even use most Nonweapon Proficiencies until he has rested a full day. Some campaigns I know allow a *heal* spell to negate or reduce this period of helplessness, but only if applied *after* the wounded character is brought back to consciousness, and the character still loses any memorized spells.

Why do weapons do different amounts of damage to creatures that are larger than man-sized? I can understand why there might be an across-the-board difference, but why do some weapons do the same damage to both man-sized and large creatures while some weapons do less damage to large creatures and still others do more damage to large creatures?

As always, this boils down to questions of game logic and game balance. If you take a look at the tables on pages 68-69 of the *PH*, you'll notice that most weapons that do less damage to large creatures are type B—crushing and bludgeoning weapons. The sheer body mass of a large creature tends to defeat these kinds of attacks. The remainder are very small, lightweight piercing weapons that have the same problem with large creatures.

Weapons that do more damage to large creatures tend to be fairly large slashing or piercing weapons that can get at a large creature's vitals. Using a pike or a lance to skewer a man through the belly might be a little tough (you're just as likely to poke him in the arm), but a giant's belly is a much easier target.

The weapons that do the same damage

to opponents of all sizes don't fit neatly into either category. A battle axe, for example, is a chopping weapon with a wedged-shaped blade that cuts well, but can't penetrate too deeply because it is relatively small.

When considering game balance, note most weapons that do extra damage to Large creatures are off-limits to wizards and most priests. Thieves and a few priests can get some of these weapons, but only warriors can get them all. This gives warriors an advantage against the game's nastiest monsters and helps compensate them for their otherwise small bag of game tricks.

The otherwise excellent *Thunder Rift* module for the D&D game contains several multi-classed, demi-human NPCs. Is this an attempt to make this module more like an AD&D game adventure?

No. It's just an editorial mistake. Ignore all references to human character classes in the material about the module's demi-human characters.

The two descriptions of the *animate dead* spell in the D&D game *Rules Cyclopedia* seem to indicate that any kind of creature can be animated. If this is the case, and a powerful creature, say a hill giant, was animated it would have nine hit dice. Could the resulting creature be turned as a mere zombie or as an undead with similar hit dice (a vampire in this case)?

Creatures created with *animate dead* are turned as either skeletons or zombies, depending on what condition the remains were in when they were *animated*. If the *animated* creature has more hit dice than the standard skeleton or zombie, it does get a THAC0 and saving throws commensurate to its actual hit dice. Note that undead turning in the D&D game affects a certain number of hit dice of undead. If, for example, a high-level spell-caster *animated* two hill-giant zombies at nine hit dice each, a cleric would have to affect at least 18 hit dice worth of undead to get them both, otherwise, only one hill-giant zombie will be turned (any successful turning attempt affects a minimum of one creature).

In the D&D game, can an item that is the trigger for a *contingency* spell be identified as such by a *find traps* spell? What about *analyze* or *lore* spells?

A *find traps* spell might indicate a *contingency* trigger if the *contingency* in question has the potential to harm the *find traps* caster or his party. For example, a *contingency* that unleashes a *dispel magic* spell when a door is opened and in turn brings down a *force field* that releases a flood of molten metal is a trap. Note, however, that *find traps* will indicate only that the trigger item has a magical trap, it does

not reveal the *contingency* spell itself or other elements in the *contingency*. In the example, *find traps* would cause the door to glow and would indicate a magical trap of some kind. The *find traps* caster would not be alerted to the *contingency*, the *force field*, or the molten metal behind it.

Analyze or lore might reveal a *contingency*, and will if the item examined has no other magical properties. On the other hand, these two spells might very well trigger the *contingency*.

Do shamans and wokani have to obey weapon and armor restrictions as do clerics and wizards?

The rules on pages 215-216 of the *Rules Cyclopedia* go out of their way to emphasize that shamans and wokani are not "full" clerics or magic-users. This leads me to recommend that such creatures be allowed to use weapons and armor appropriate to their races. For example, a hill-giant wokan might use a huge club and be able to hurl boulders, just like other hill-giants.

Will a creative writing major improve my chances of becoming a consulting writer for TSR, Inc., after graduation? Will it help me get a full-time job writ-

ing for TSR, Inc.? How do I go about getting a job at TSR, Inc.?

The answers to these questions have appeared in print time and again, but not anytime recently and never in "Sage Advice," so here it goes:

Some kind of degree in English certainly won't hurt your chances of getting work with TSR, Inc., but your education isn't nearly important as demonstrating the ability to write about games. The best way for you to do this is to get something into print. Start by getting writer's guidelines for DRAGON® Magazine, DUNGEON® Adventures, and for the RPGA® Network (be sure to ask for both POLYHEDRON® Newszine guidelines and the tournament program). Note that the Newszine only accepts material from RPGA Network members, but anyone can submit tournaments. In any case, take what you've learned in your college English classes, write something, and submit it.

TSR, Inc., calls its "consulting writers" free-lancers, and it uses a fair number of them. However, just about every free-lancer TSR has ever used has had a full-time job and wrote for TSR to earn some extra cash—and for the thrill of it. There just isn't enough money in freelancing to make even a marginal living if that's all

you do. So plan on finding a decent job when you graduate.

There are two official channels for inquiring about employment at TSR. One is the personnel department, which handles hiring; TSR's business address is printed on the back cover and title page of every TSR product. Adding the words "Attention Personnel Department" to the address on your letter will speed up any response. Frankly, writing to the personnel department probably will just get you a polite form letter, but you asked the question. The other channels are the various submissions editors. For magazines, write to the editorial address shown on the masthead—but get writing guidelines before you submit anything, and don't bother with resumes and long letters describing your life history. The Games Department of TSR does not consider submissions from unpublished authors; you have to get some experience first. If you don't have any luck with TSR's professional magazines, try writing for some of the industry's other companies (and their magazines), or see if you can locate a good fanzine or game-club newsletter. The latter small, amateur publications won't make you famous, but they're a good place to get your feet wet.

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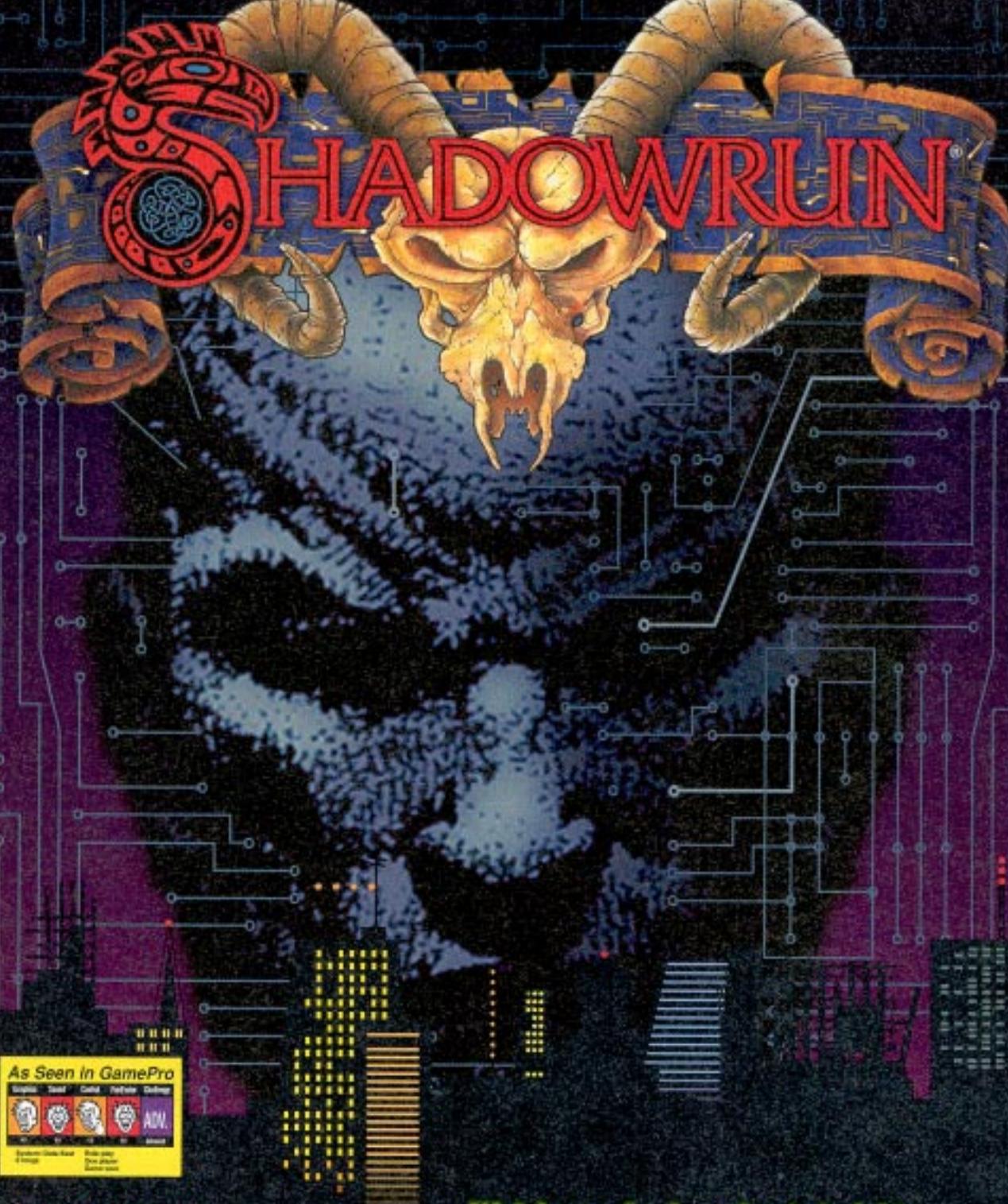
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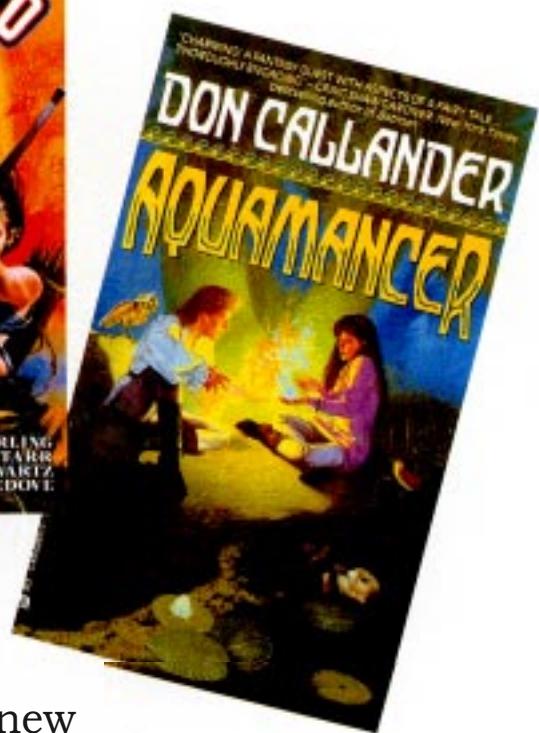
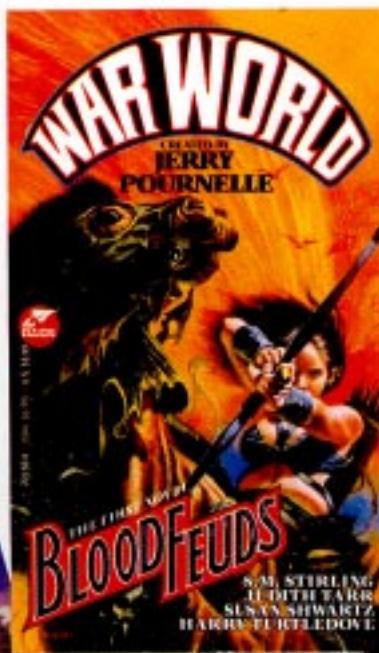
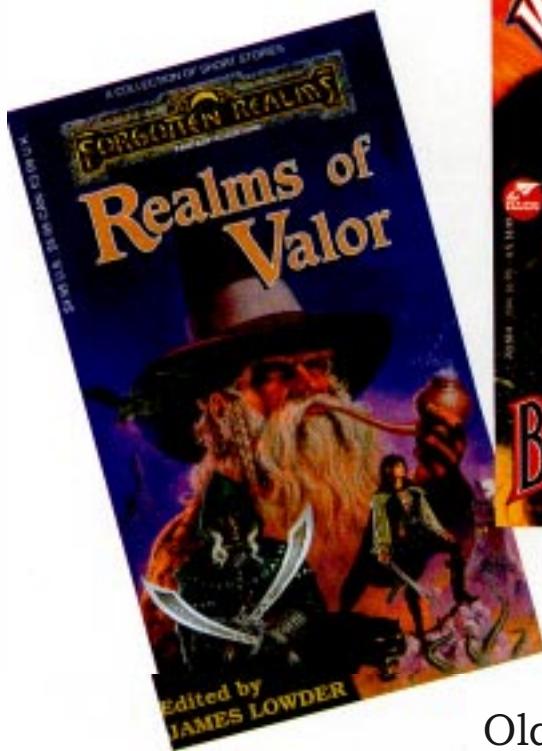
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THE GRAIL OF HEARTS

Susan Shwartz

Tor O-812-55409-4

\$4.99

STRANGE DEVICES OF THE SUN AND MOON

Lisa Goldstein

Tor O-312-85460-9

\$19.95

Susan Shwartz and Lisa Goldstein both mine familiar territory in this pair of fantasy novels: Shwartz draws on the legends (and interpretations of the legends) surrounding the Wandering Jew and the Holy Grail, while Goldstein mingles the rich

detail of Elizabethan London with an equal portion of Celtic faerie-lore. But there the resemblances end, for while *The Grail of Hearts* is eminently successful at synthesizing its diverse source material into a cogent, lyrical whole, *Strange Devices of the Sun and Moon* never manages to combine its parts to produce a coherent vision.

Shwartz's inspirations include the Bible, Wagnerian opera, and a host of medieval Arthurian and Grail lore that is concisely acknowledged and described in the back of the book. Arthur and the

Round Table, though, scarcely figure in her tale. The focus instead is on Kundry, a woman whose laughter at the crucifixion of one Joshua ben Joseph has sentenced her to a life of wandering that cannot end until "a fool made wise by pity" forgives her and sets her free. Meanwhile, she unwillingly serves the sorcerer Klingsor, who seeks to multiply his powers by acquiring the Holy Grail and its brother relic, the Spear which pierced Christ's side.

Kundry's travels take her backward in time as well as forward, in a narrative that

touches the whole of her thousand-year journey at one time or another. It's here that Shwartz's mastery of her material shows. Whether the scene is the high medieval enclave of the Grail knights, the mystical forest of Broceliande, or the bustling Jerusalem of the Gospels, neither Kundry nor the time-bound folk she meets seem strange or out of place. What's more, Shwartz's agile prose skillfully balances a consistent, faintly mystical tone with an observant period-sense that makes each of the varied historical settings come to vivid life.

The Grail of Hearts uses its diverse source material in the service of a story that's all its own, borrowing specific elements from many different places to produce a novel that is more than the sum of its parts. That's an achievement that takes scholarly expertise as well as storytelling ability—and it's one that *Strange Devices of the Sun and Moon* can't claim to have accomplished.

It's not that Goldstein didn't do the research. On the contrary, her version of Elizabethan England is replete with authentic details of person and place. But where Shwartz creates a tightly woven tapestry from a host of individual threads, Goldstein lets the strands of her own narrative run free in a wild tangle that speaks more of confusion than of intricate design.

The story opens with no less than three parallel plots. The hosts of Faerie have ridden into London for reasons known only to themselves; bookseller and playbill-publisher Alice Wood is coping with the challenges of her deceased husband's business activities and rumors of her long-lost son's reappearance; and playwright Christopher "Kit" Marlowe is chasing a series of literary and political intrigues in pursuit of whatever his fortunes grant. While it soon becomes clear that both Alice's and Marlowe's troubles can be traced to faerie interference in mortal affairs, and to the ambitions of a circle of would-be alchemists, their stories go off on separate tangents rather than building toward a common goal or resolution.

Part of the trouble is that while Goldstein has done quite well in recreating her Elizabethan characters, her treatment of magic and myth is much less distinctive. Her alchemists practice cardboard pseudo-science, and her faerie folk in particular lack mythic resonance, seeming instead to be cloned from the modern work of such novelists as Emma Bull and Charles de Lint. Instead of allowing the various worldviews she establishes to blend into a satisfying composite, Goldstein sets them against each other without laying enough groundwork to make the conflict believable.

That jarring quality is all the more frustrating because the writing itself, on a basic narrative level, is actually quite

good. Goldstein does well at building individual characters, staging specific scenes, and propelling the book along from one event to another. But though this book can hold a reader's attention, it never engages the imagination or emotional intimacy needed to truly become involved in the story it tells.

As a result, *Strange Devices of the Sun and Moon* is the less accessible of the two books despite a setting and cast that are probably more familiar to the average reader than those of Shwartz's novel. Where *The Grail of Hearts* succeeds in bringing life and warmth to a relatively obscure corner of a classic legend, Goldstein invests a well-known historical setting with a tale that is more fun to dissect than it is to read.

AQUAMANCER

Don Callander

Ace 0-441-02816-0 \$4.99

There's nothing in *Aquamancer* that hasn't been seen in dozens of fantasy novels before now: wizards and witches, sentient crockery, talking animals, mysterious castles, an assortment of fairies and other magical creatures, and all the props that go with them. Add to that a prose style littered with capital letters and more lessons in good manners than an etiquette manual, and by rights, Don Callander's second novel ought to qualify as the ultimate cliché. Yet Callander somehow takes all these ingredients and blends them into a yarn that's entertaining in spite of its utter familiarity—while violating two of the novelist's most basic rules in the process.

The first of these violations is that there's virtually no sense of jeopardy or dramatic tension in the tale; journeyman fire wizard Douglas Brightglade and Myrn, his fiancé and the book's title character, always have the right spell or solution at hand, and their powers nearly always work as expected. Even when their band of adventurers is deep in a tunnel system inside an active volcano on the verge of erupting, the pace remains even and amiable, there's no doubt that our heroes are going to survive.

The second of Callander's unorthodox tactics is his narration—and "narration," in this case, is exactly the right word. Callander is very much the invisible and omniscient storyteller, who relates events and conversations with smooth prose that neatly tells what happened (and what each character is thinking), yet doesn't inject the reader into the story. Events and emotions are described rather than experienced, so that even though Callander gives plenty of matter-of-fact everyday detail, there's always a faint barrier between the reader and the story.

At the same time, though, Callander keeps any hint of the artificial out of his story. The world of *Aquamancer* may be generic, but the story is honest about it, right down to the major place names:

There's a dukedom called Dukedom, an old kingdom called Old Kingdom, and a sea called Sea. His major characters are equally open and disarming; while the plot may make them look invincible, they don't act that way as the tale unfolds.

That may just be the secret of the book's attraction. This is fantasy at its most basic, but Callander has managed to keep the essential flavor intact while cutting the ingredients down to the absolute minimum. It's an approach busy gamers may find worth investigating, and a reminder that keeping fantasy adventures entertaining doesn't always require encyclopedic background or complex psychological drama.

REALMS OF VALOR

James Lowder, ed.

TSR 1-56076-557-7

\$4.95

Shared worlds have come a long way since the concept first achieved prominence under the *Thieves' World* label back in 1979, branching out from close-knit collections of short sword-and-sorcery adventures into complex "mosaic novels" of superheroics, books full of exotic science fictional world-building, and series in which well-known authors open their own worlds to tales by newer writers. Now the concept comes almost full circle, as this latest FORGOTTEN REALMS® book breathes life back into short sword-and-sorcery fiction.

That's admirable in and of itself. Apart from DRAGON® Magazine and Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Sword & Sorceress* anthologies (plus her quarterly magazine), there are few reliable sources for short stories in the fantasy-adventure category. But editor James Lowder has done more than simply filling a niche in the fantasy market; *Realms of Valor* is a collection as entertaining as it is significant.

Strictly speaking, the anthology should be classed as a "shared setting" book rather than a shared-world volume, as there's little if any interplay between each contributor's lead characters—we have yet, for instance, to see Ed Greenwood's Elminster encounter R. A. Salvatore's Drizzt Do'Urden. We do, however, see both characters individually: Elminster in a half-comic, half-deadly yarn that nicely solves the problem of writing adventures for a nearly invincible wizard, and Drizzt in a first-person tale that finds the dark elf almost but not quite too heavy-handed as a lecturer in ethics.

The liveliest adventure in the collection comes from Elaine Cunningham, who brings back her Harper agents from *Elfshadow* in an engaging intrigue where avoiding assassination is as much a matter of superior bargaining skill as superior swordcraft. Scott Ciencin's "A Virtue by Reflection" features Myrmeen Lhal, ruler of Arabel, in a murder mystery that combines crafty plotting with unexpectedly thoughtful characterization. And Christie

Golden's reluctant elven vampire, Jander Sunstar, returns in "One Last Drink," where Golden delves into her character's background while retaining a distinctive view of vampiric unlif. Other notable contributions include stories from Douglas Niles, Mark Anthony, and Troy Denning.

A further highlight of the book is Jeff Grubb's closing essay on the origins and development of the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting. While it's a little too quick to define writers as gods, it's a pleasant glimpse behind the scenes of one of fantasy gaming's most successful universes.

Indeed, *Realms of Valor* is good enough that it deserves to become more than one of a kind. At the least, its creators should consider producing another collection—and an annual volume of short sword-and-sorcery tales of this caliber, in the Realms or outside them, would be a feather worth chasing to pin on TSR's literary cap.

WAR WORLD: BLOOD FEUDS

Created by Jerry Pournelle

Baen 0-671-72150-X \$5.99

In the book-reviewing business, you don't expect to like everything you read. So it was with *Blood Feuds*; I started it figuring that I was long overdue for a look at military science fiction, of which I've never been a great fan.

Now I'm hooked, and waiting for the sequel.

I should have expected it, considering the team responsible for this first full-length novel in Jerry Pournelle's War World universe. Judith Tarr, S. M. Stirling, Susan Shwartz, and Harry Turtledove are all more than credible novelists by themselves; put them together, and you have a four-way collaboration with enough sheer energy to outwit a small Third World country. You also have a novel that I'm quite sure has more historical and literary allusions than I've found yet, not to mention being a rare treat for any gamer with an interest in military strategy.

The setting is the barely habitable world of Haven, where (as the British did with Australia) several generations of interstellar government have exiled their misfits and criminals. Worse, Haven is the last refuge of the genetically enhanced and power-hungry Saurons, who lost a bid for mastery of the stars and are now in nominal control of Haven's key resources and its largely fragmented population. Though badly outnumbered, the Saurons are sufficiently superhuman that it doesn't take many of them to keep the "normal" human population in line. But forces are coming together to oppose the Sauron dominion—and some of them have Sauron blood.

This is a war whose generals take the long view, plotted with slow precision and attention to logistics by commanders who are all too cognizant of the price of defeat.

Yet like wars throughout time, it's also vulnerable to unpredictable events and individuals, to decisions made by otherwise minor players at exactly the wrong moments. There are memorable battles and long periods of waiting between them, dramatic confrontations and lonely scouting missions. The whole breadth of war is here in one chapter or another.

There are no black-and-white heroes or villains; one of the benefits of the four-way collaboration is that each viewpoint is rendered with equal pragmatism. One may not *like* the Saurons, but given what they are, it's hard not to empathize with them as they struggle to maintain their positions in the face of a growing, intangible sense of impending disaster. The collaborators draw to excellent effect on a variety of literary, classical, and cultural lore in depicting Haven's harshly-adapted populace, from the Tolkien-influenced Saurons to the nomads of the Pale to the religiously strict Edenites.

Making war interesting, even compelling, without descending into blood-lust, technical jargon, or ravening ideological tracts is a tricky business. However, it's one that Tarr, Shwartz, Stirling, and Turtledove have managed remarkably well. As *Blood Feuds* concludes, one phase of the war is over, but much more is yet to come. Fortunately, gamers with an interest in campaign-level combat logistics should find lots of material worth dissecting in the first volume while they wait for the second to hit the stands.

THE CITY WHO FOUGHT

Anne McCaffrey & S. M. Stirling

Baen 0-671-72166-6 \$19.00

What's striking about this novel, the third in a series spun off from co-author Anne McCaffrey's *The Ship Who Sang*, is that it both is and isn't a McCaffrey book. McCaffrey and collaborator S.M. Stirling have penned a tale that fits squarely into the series' interstellar milieu of partnered shellpersons and brawns, yet has a dangerous, hard-edged streak that contrasts sharply with McCaffrey's usual tone. That speaks well for the duo's collaborative skills, though it should be noted that "collaboration" nowadays can have a variety of meanings. (In the case of this series, McCaffrey's role is apparently that of developer, outliner, and continuity cop; the text itself is primarily Stirling's.)

The City Who Fought takes the series in several new directions at once. Besides being the first male shellperson in a leading book role, Simeon of Station SSS-900 isn't the brain of a starship—he's the heart of a city-sized trading outpost on the fringes of Central Worlds space. The bigger job, though, comes with bigger risks, in the form of genetically enhanced space pirates for whom Simeon's station is a supremely tempting target. Between a shipful of refugees fleeing the pirate fleet,

a rogue teenager who's also a gadget wizard, and a brawn who refuses to let him dodge uncomfortable realities, Simeon may have barely enough resources to defeat the pirates—but only if he can keep his own existence a secret.

Stirling has a long track record in military SF, and it shows. Both Simeon's forces and the Fist of Kolnar display a crisp mastery of strategy and tactics, and the conflict unfolds logically and fairly, with no undue bias in favor of the "good guys" purely because they're the good guys. The Fist, in fact, gets enough screen time to emerge as much more than a one-dimensional threat. While one can't exactly feel sorry for the pirates, these are villains whose background has been thought out unusually well.

At the same time, the novel doesn't ignore the romantic and sentimental elements that are a trademark of this series. There's an intriguing, nicely paced triangle involving Simeon, new brawn Channa Hap, and refugee leader Amos ben Sierra Nueva. Complicating the equation is the teenaged Joat (for "jack of all trades"), who has to be persuaded to leave a tenuous runaway's existence in the station's web of maintenance corridors. The characterizations are agreeable, and the relationships entirely credible.

That makes *The City Who Fought* a study in contrast, as a cast of generally amiable protagonists is tossed unceremoniously into a small-scale war. McCaffrey and Stirling have produced a book that expands the boundaries of the series to which it belongs, yet remains consistent with the cycle's overall design. Fans of both writers should be more than pleased with the results.

Recurring roles

The news in the Department of Continuing Series is uniformly good this month, with no less than six very welcome volumes out from five different authors. The double contribution comes from Holly Lisle, whose *Bones of the Past* (Baen, \$4.99) adds a new and sometimes dark texture to the world introduced in *Fire in the Mist*. Between the weird gods of the Wen jungle tribes and barbarian scholar Medwind Song's own theological conflicts, Lisle takes her tale well beyond "mere" sword-and-sorcery while retaining the solid action and suspense of her previous work. Meanwhile, she's also joined forces with Mercedes Lackey to produce the third SERRATED Edge novel, *When the Bough Breaks* (Baen, \$4.99), which mixes a no-holds-barred child-abuse scenario with the series' cadre of elven-born race-car drivers—who are being pursued by a shady character who's after psi-gifted individuals for unsavory purposes. This is a remarkable book where there are no clear villains and no artificially happy endings, and where high-octane adventure and sharp social commentary strike a narrow but assured balance.

Shifting gears into science fiction, *An Earthly Crown* (DAW, \$5.99) reaffirms the strong impression Kate Elliott made with *Jaran*. Elliott warns readers up front that this 500-page book is just the first half of "a novel in five acts," and the theatrical metaphor is entirely appropriate. An acting company is providing cover for Charles Soerenson to visit the interdicted world of Rhui (where his sister and heir, Tess, was stranded in the prior book), and Elliott (like Lisle) uses the opportunity to broaden her focus and raise the stakes for her characters. There's a sense of high drama and grand scale here that promises to make this series one of SF's most memorable sagas by the time it's finished.

The Castle of the Silver Wheel (Ace, \$4.99) finds Teresa Edgerton returning to the proto-Celtic world of her Green Lion trilogy to present a tale that is at once intimate and formal, graceful and unpolished. In their own ways, knight and king's-man Tryffin and the young, magically gifted bride Gwenlliant are eminently capable individuals. However, when they're thrown together, coping with the resulting challenges becomes much more difficult. Edgerton's writing has a low-key quality that sneaks up on you; it's not until after you've finished the book that you realize just how good she is. Future

installments of this trilogy will be worth watching for.

There had also better be another book coming in Barbara Hambly's suspenseful Windrose Chronicles, concerning extra-worldly wizard Antryg Windrose and his Earthly companion, Joanna Sheraton. Although *Dog Wizard* (Del Rey, \$4.99) is structurally a stand-alone novel (and the cleverest mystery-puzzler Hambly has yet devised), it packs a wickedly black-comic yet eminently logical punchline that will take at least one more volume to resolve.

Lawrence Watt-Evans's Ethshar series is much more open-ended. Although long-time readers will note some familiar faces around the edges of *Taking Flight* (Del Rey, \$4.99), no prior experience with the cycle is needed to enjoy this quiet yarn about a young man who doesn't find quite the adventure he expected. This is a slice-of-life twist on fantasy journeying that has no epic qualities whatever, yet manages to be entertaining all the same.

Oops!

As Lester Smith noted in a recent letter (DRAGON® issue #190), an important error slipped into my review of *Dragons Over England* in DRAGON issue #185. The story referred to should have been identified as G.D. Swick's "Warriors of Destiny," not Smith's "Child of Thunders." That's a

mistake I should have caught, and I regret making it.

It's a good opportunity, though, to mention that I always welcome feedback. While I can't always reply to letters personally, any and all comments and suggestions are welcome, and can be sent to:

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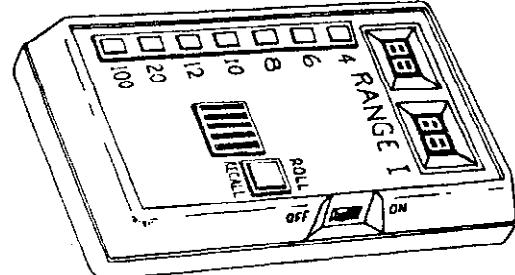
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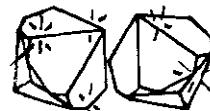
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I am Jodar...



...an entity from another reality. I search for a few good minds willing to help me save a universe. In return, I shall release the ultimate power within!

But, for now, my power wanes and I must leave.

Watch for me — I shall return...



The Dragon's Bestiary

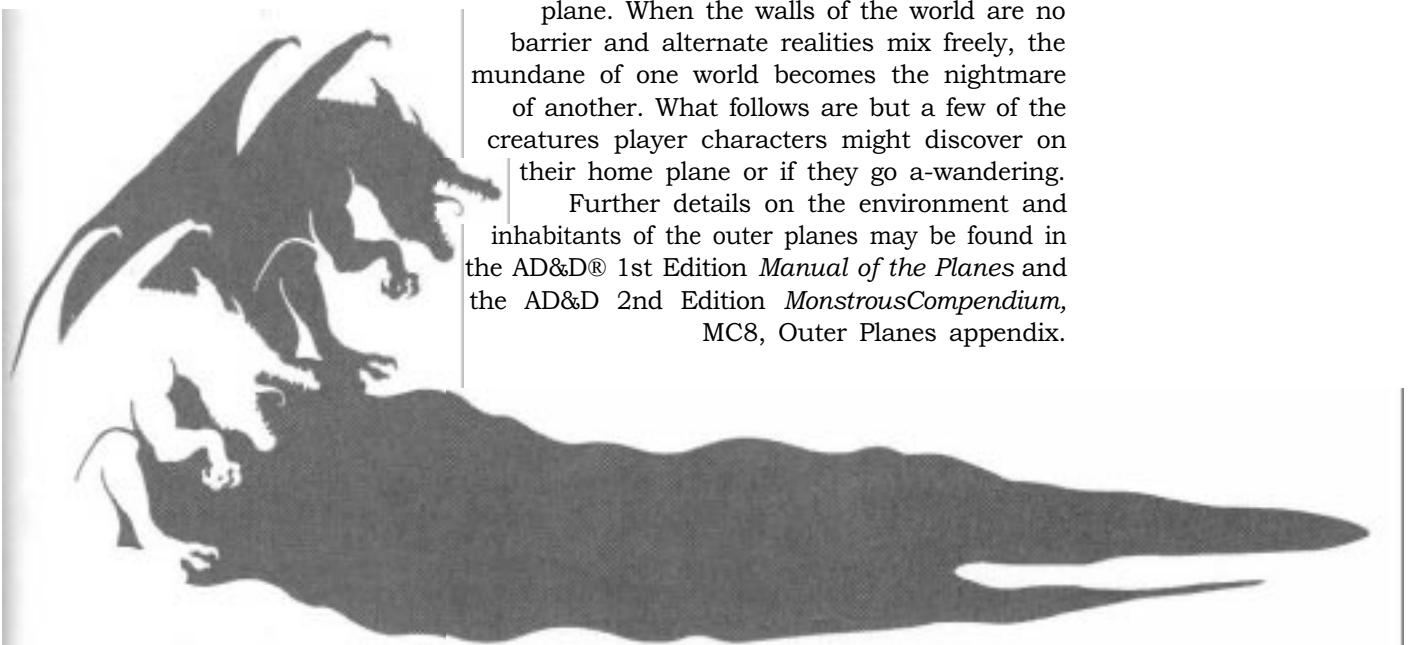
They came from the Outer Planes!

by **Randy Maxwell**

Artwork by Tom Baxa

Planar travelers tell tales of the sublime terrors and thrills waiting for those who leave the bounds of the Prime Material plane. Occasionally, those thrills and terrors of other planes become wanderers themselves and can be found under the skies of the Prime Material plane. When the walls of the world are no barrier and alternate realities mix freely, the mundane of one world becomes the nightmare of another. What follows are but a few of the creatures player characters might discover on their home plane or if they go a-wandering.

Further details on the environment and inhabitants of the outer planes may be found in the AD&D® 1st Edition *Manual of the Planes* and the AD&D 2nd Edition *Monstrous Compendium*, MC8, Outer Planes appendix.



Giant nautilus

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any aquatic
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Genius (17-18)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	-3 (shell)/3 (body)
MOVEMENT:	Sw 18
HIT DICE:	14
THAC0:	7
NO. OF ATTACKS:	21
DAMAGE/ATTACKS:	1d8x20/5d4
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See text
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See text
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	20%
SIZE:	G (50'+ diameter)
MORALE:	Champion (15-16)
XP VALUE:	19,000

The giant nautilus is a native of the plane of elemental Water. It has also been encountered on Thalasia, the great sea that occupies a layer of Elysium; the ocean Lunia, in the first layer of the Seven Heavens; and on Olympus, in the depths of Poseidon's realm. On the Prime Material plane, it wanders the depths of the deepest oceans. In appearance, the giant nautilus seems but a gigantic version of its diminutive cousin. In the case of the giant version, the spirally coiled shell is AC -3 and 50'-60' in diameter. The creature is often called the "druid of the deep" because of its absolute neutral alignment and insistence on maintaining the balance of the underwater world. The giant nautilus considers a sunken ship a terrible eyesore and actively helps in its removal (such help is usually in the form of protecting those removing the ship from the fearsome predators of the depths). The creature is totally uninterested in treasure of any kind, but it is not completely naive. It has a basic understanding of avarice and greed. Therefore, the nautilus demands that sunken vessels carrying more mundane cargo be removed before it allows the removal of a sunken treasure ship. It also demands the removal of the *entire ship*, not just the cargo.

Combat: Twenty strong tentacles (AC 3) encircle the creature's mouth. It can grab and constrict opponents with these tentacles for 1d8 hp damage each, while bringing the unfortunate victim into its huge mouth. The mouth is large enough to swallow a man-sized creature whole on a natural roll of 18 or better. The mouth can also bite a victim for 5d4 hp damage.

Depending on the attacker's size, the nautilus can bring all 20 tentacles to bear on a single opponent, or it may elect to attack 20 separate targets. It generally uses only three tentacles per man-sized target. Any character constricted by a tentacle may have one arm (01-50%, DM's choice left or right), neither arm (51-75%), or both arms (76-100%) pinned and unusable. A constricted character cannot cast any spells but can attack the constricting tentacle with a weapon at -3 (one arm free) or -1 (both arms free). Each rubbery tentacle cannot be broken by force and requires 15 hp of damage from a sharp or edged weapon before being severed (severed tentacles regenerate in about one week).

Luckily, the giant nautilus has seldom been known to attack humans or any of the intelligent ocean-dwelling races, except in self-defense. The giant nautilus has a form of telepathy that allows it to communicate with any intelligent creature, regardless of language barriers. It is generally on good terms with most of the underwater races, including the sahuagin and ixitxachitl. In fact, the giant nautilus is often used by the tritons, mermen, and locathah as an impartial judge to mediate disputes among themselves and other races. For all its peaceful intent, the giant nau-



tilus puts a stop to anyone overfishing a particular location or polluting areas of the sea by dumping garbage. It attempts to negotiate a settlement at first. If negotiation fails to work, it then warns the offenders. If the warnings are not heeded, the giant nautilus forcibly puts a stop to the offending action. It can drag a ship of small size below the water's surface, and it can stop the movement of a larger one after one turn of winding its arms around the ship and dragging. After six or more tentacles have squeezed a ship's hull for three consecutive rounds, the vessel suffers damage as if it had been rammed, and it begins to sink.

The giant nautilus can use the following spell-like powers, one per round, at will (consult the article "Undersea Priests" in DRAGON® issue #165 for priest spells not listed in the AD&D 2nd Edition Player's Handbook): *charm person or mammal; conjure fish; conjure water elemental* (3 times per day); *control temperature, 10' radius; detect evil/good; detect magic; fish summoning I, II, and III; know alignment* (always active); *locate fish or plants; lower water; part water; wall of coral.*

Habitat/Society: The giant nautilus is a solitary wanderer of the depths and maintains no lair or permanent abode. The creature is long lived and has a natural life span of 3,000-4,000 years. Sages speculate the creature uses magic to return at times to the plane of Water, there to mate and reproduce. Where or how this takes place is unknown. An encounter with a young giant nautilus has never been recorded.

Ecology: The giant nautilus is a carnivore, and it preys on huge crustaceans such as giant crabs and giant lobsters. It has no natural enemies but is sometimes in conflict with the kraken (see "Squid, Giant" in the *Monstrous Compendium*). The kraken's grandiose schemes of underwater empire are often at the expense of the environment; in such cases, the nautilus is forced to intervene. The shell of the giant nautilus is a great prize. It can be converted into a roomy, virtually crush-proof submarine for exploring the depths of the ocean—a project that many tinker gnomes of Krynn would gladly undertake.

Abyss ants

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Abyss or temperate forest, hills, or plains of the Prime Material plane
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon (Abyss)/Very rare (Prime Material)
ORGANIZATION:	Colony
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5-7)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral evil
NO. APPEARING:	1-300
ARMOR CLASS:	3
MOVEMENT:	18
HIT DICE:	3
THAC0:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2
DAMAGE/ATTACKS:	1d6 (bite) and 1d6+2 (sting)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Spit acid
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See text
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	T (2' long)
MORALE:	Fearless (19-20)
XP VALUE:	175

Abyss ants are found on many layers of the Abyss. These horrors appear on the Prime Material plane only when deliberately brought there by evil wizards and priests. Tanar'ri of the Abyss also occasionally rid themselves of a particularly troublesome nest by *gating* the entire colony to the Prime Material plane. Abyss ants are about the same size and shape as giant ants. However, their piebald coloration of putrid pink and fish-belly white immediately alerts the observer to the difference.

Combat: Abyss ants are immune to normal heat and cold and take only half-damage from magical heat or cold attacks. When attacking, they sting for 1d6+2 hp damage. (The stinger delivers 1-6 hp damage while the ants' poison, almost pure acid, automatically delivers an additional 2 hp in burn damage—no save.) These ants bite with their powerful mandibles for 1-6 hp damage. They are each also able to spit an acidic goo, up to 10', three times a day for an additional 2d4 hp damage (save vs. wands to avoid all damage). The gooey acid can be used in the preparation of *ultimate solvent*.

The ants have limited telepathy among themselves within 600'. Should an ant be attacked, others in the colony will know immediately and rush to its aid. Also, the ants use the telepathy to call up reinforcements before launching an attack of their own. When engaged in combat, the telepathy is used to "target" an individual in a group. Instead of attacking the opposing group as a whole, each individual ant directs its attacks at a single individual in the opposing force. Using this targeting method, they can bring down even the largest creatures. Should an adventuring party encounter such ants, they swarm a single victim (chosen at random) until he is incapacitated or dead, then move on to the next party member.

Habitat/Society: A colony of Abyss ants appears much the same as a normal giant ant nest. The colony lairs underground in a series of chambers and passages with low mounds of dirt and pebbles marking the entrances. Abyss ants dig deep, wide nests with some chambers as far as 50' underground and the entire nest spreading out over an area exceeding many thousands of square yards.

Unlike giant ants, ants of the Abyss are not differentiated into workers and warriors. All Abyss ants, except the queen, are worker/warriors. A typical colony consists of 10x5d6 worker/warriors and a single queen. The queen (MV 1, HD 6) appears as a huge bloated version of a normal Abyss ant. She has no stinger, but is able to bite and spit acid as the other ants. The queen is



responsible only for deciding (in the beginning) exactly where to establish the nest; then she lays eggs to perpetuate it. The worker/warriors are responsible for defending the queen and the colony, gathering food, attending the eggs and larvae, and establishing the ecosystem (see "Ecology") around the nest. At any one time, 60% of the colony's ants are above ground tending the ecosystem and 40% are underground tending the nest. The queen always has an entourage of 2-20 guards and servants in the chamber with her.

Ecology: Abyss ants are ferociously territorial and actually establish their own ecosystem in a circle around their lair. The diameter of the circle depends on the size of the colony, usually 1,000 yards for every 50 ants in a colony. It may be much larger or slightly smaller depending on local geography and the abundance or scarcity of needed food. The ants allow nothing to live within the circle, plant or animal, that does not serve their needs. The ants continuously patrol the perimeter of their established ecosystem, and small groups of 1d6+4 ants scout as far as 1d4+6 miles outside the circle's perimeter.

The ants are of low intelligence but clearly understand the advantages of domesticating and maintaining a steady source of food. Being carnivorous, they establish and tend "herds." The herd animals may consist of cows, deer, horses, humans, demihumans, goblinoids, or whatever is handy or indigenous to the area. The ants only allow the grass, plants, animals, or other food sources the herd animals need to remain in their area. All other predators, animals insects, weeds, and even trees and bushes are killed and devoured, or removed if inedible. The Abyss ants post sentries and watch the herd continually. This assures that no predators attack the herd and that the herd does not leave the area.

The ants kill and devour their herd creatures as needed. The unfortunate victim is dissolved (hair, hide, bones, and all) by the ants, using their acidic goo. The resulting flesh pudding is shared and consumed by the entire colony. Any character devoured by the ants is gone forever and cannot be *reincarnated* or *resurrected*.

Incarnates

Information is for major incarnates; statistics on minor incarnates appears in square brackets.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Upper, Lower, and Prime Material planes
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	See text
INTELLIGENCE:	Exceptional
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	See text
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	0
MOVEMENT:	Fl 18 (A)
HIT DICE:	10 [4]
THAC0:	11 [17]
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACKS:	See text
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See text
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See text
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	T (1' diameter)
MORALE:	Champion (15-16)
XP VALUE:	5,000 [975]

Incarnates inhabit many of the Outer planes, primarily the upper and lower. They tend to gravitate toward planes and planar layers that suit their individual alignments and temperaments. Incarnates are divided into major and minor types. The major classification holds only two: good incarnates and evil incarnates. The 14 minor incarnates are divided loosely and equally into good and evil groupings. The good-aligned minor incarnates are: charity, courage, hope, loyalty, justice, temperance, and wisdom. The evil-aligned minor incarnates are: anger, covetousness, envy, gluttony, lust, pride, and sloth. Incarnates, major or minor, are formed of the pure energy of the particular property involved: An evil incarnate is formed of pure living evil energy, and a courage incarnate is formed of the living energy of pure courage. An incarnate is intelligent and completely invisible. If magically viewed by spell or device, it appears as a multicolored ball of light.

Combat: Incarnates are attracted to energy sources similar to their own substance. Good incarnates are attracted to sources of goodness, anger incarnates are attracted by the anger in an angry creature, the courageous attract courage incarnates, etc. Incarnates attack and attempt to possess a victim (called the host) in order to feed on that energy, however small such a source may be. The touch of an incarnate drains 2 points of Constitution per hit. As the host's Constitution is drained, he suffers not only the penalties of lowered Constitution, but also feels an increasing weakness creeping over his mind and body. If the host's Constitution reaches zero, the incarnate may take possession of the host's body. The host is entitled to a system-shock roll; if the roll is made, the incarnate is unable to possess the host. The host's Constitution immediately returns to normal once possession of the host has occurred or the system-shock roll is made. In addition, if the incarnate ceases the attack for any reason (killed, captured, driven off, etc.) before it possesses the host, the victim's Constitution returns to normal at the rate of 2 points per turn. (Monsters without Constitution scores are assumed to have a default value of 12.)

Once in possession of a host, the incarnate can use the host body as it desires. The incarnate and host can communicate



through a telepathic link established after possession is made. The incarnate can control all speech, actions, and spell-casting by the host. However, not all incarnates use this control. Good-aligned incarnates will possess a host but rarely attempt to control or interfere with the host's behavior; possession allows the incarnate to feed on the courage, hope, etc., of the host. As is detailed later, good incarnates avoid possessing hosts who will be harmed by their presence, instead choosing those who would not only survive but also continue acting in a good manner. Evil incarnates are not so choosy, and they care nothing for their hosts except to get as much energy from them as possible. Incarnates gift their hosts with special powers during the time of possession.

Only one incarnate of any kind can possess a host at any one time. Also, possession by any incarnate renders the host immune to possession by any other creature, such as a ghost or haunt, or even a wizard using a *magic jar* spell. The host is also immune to many mind-affecting spells, as if the host had a Wisdom score of 25 (see the AD&D 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*, page 17).

Incarnates can be driven from their hosts or victims only by the appropriate spells (see later) or by the death of the host body. Attacks against those possessed by an incarnate affect only the host's body and not the incarnate. This includes all energy draining, spell, and weapon attacks. The host is a buffer between the incarnate and an attack. However, this does not render the incarnate completely immune to all spells. Minor incarnates can be dislodged from a host by *dispel evil/good* or a *limited wish* spell. The spells *abjure*, *exorcise*, *holy/unholy word*, and *wish* are effective against both major and minor incarnates and can be used to force an incarnate to leave the host. Once an incarnate leaves or is forced from a host, it may be attacked physically. Physical attacks require a +1 or better weapon to hit. Also, incarnates are immune to heat-, cold-, and electrical-based attacks.

Incarnates

Ecology: Major incarnates — Major incarnates cannot possess creatures of less than 10 HD without completely destroying them. Victims of less than 10 HD are simply incinerated by the force of the major incarnate's pure good or evil energy. Creatures of greater than 10 HD, but of an alignment not that of the major incarnate, take damage from the possession. Damage is a base 10d8, minus 1d8 per level of difference between the incarnate and the host. Suppose a 15th-level good or neutral fighter is possessed by an evil major incarnate. The fighter takes 5d8 in damage from the possession (15-10 = 5 levels difference, thus 10d8-5d8 = 5d8). If the fighter were 10th level, he would take the full 10d8 in damage; if 20th level or greater, he would take no damage from the possession. In addition, after possession has taken place and damage (if any) assessed, the host's alignment is immediately and temporarily changed to that of the major incarnate.

Major incarnates are very rare and only appear on the Prime Material plane when in possession of some creature capable of planar travel. (Sages tell the story of a lawful-good silver dragon who visited the Abyss in pursuit of an enemy. There, it was possessed by an evil incarnate. After its return to the Prime Material plane, the dragon's behavior was so despicable even red dragons could not abide its company, and it had to be captured by wizards and priests to be cleansed of its master.)

Good incarnates: Good incarnates are lawful good in alignment and dwell in Chronias, the seventh heaven of the Seven Heavens. They are sometimes found on Solania, Mertion, and Jovar, the fourth, fifth, and sixth of the Seven Heavens, respectively. In the Seven Heavens, good incarnates use only sword and tome archons as hosts. On the Prime Material plane, they prefer to possess only lawful-good beings, such as paladins, lawful-good clerics, lammasu, and gold and silver dragons.

The relationship between the good incarnate and its host is synergistic—that is, the two form a whole greater than the sum of their parts. The host gains the following abilities: *detect evil* and *protection from evil, 10' radius*, (both abilities are always active); turn undead as a 5th level cleric (or at five levels higher than normal if the host is already able to turn undead); Wisdom and Strength are raised by 1 each; and Charisma is raised by 3 (to a maximum of 19). Major incarnates have none of the above abilities unless in possession of a host.

Evil incarnates: Evil incarnates make their home in the darkest, vilest layers of the Abyss. They are chaotic evil and prefer to possess only the most evil of the true tanar'ri. They also enjoy possessing visitors to the Abyss, then returning to the host's home plane to wreak havoc. Individuals in positions of power, regardless of their alignment, are the hosts of choice for these incarnates when they are on the Prime Material plane. Powerful personages are able to do a great deal of evil in a short period of time. In addition, the evil caused (such as a war or deforestation) may have long-lasting effects that cannot quickly be undone.

As with good incarnates, the relationship between the host and the incarnate generates abilities neither normally possess. The host of an evil major incarnate has the following abilities: *detect good* and *protection from good 10' radius* (both abilities always active); control undead and turn paladins as a 5th-level evil cleric (or at five levels higher than normal if the host is already able to control undead and turn paladins); Wisdom is lowered by 1; Strength is raised by 2 (to a maximum of 19); and Charisma is lowered by 3 (to a minimum of 3). Major incarnates have none of the above abilities unless in possession of a host.

Minor incarnates — Hosts for minor incarnates may, depending on the incarnate, have certain ability scores increased or decrease by the possession. In such cases, any bonuses or penalties caused by the increase or decrease in an ability scores are applied immediately upon successful possession of the host by the incarnate. Bonuses caused by incarnate possession never raise an ability score above 18; likewise, a penalty never reduces it to less than 3.

Unless otherwise noted, both good and evil minor incarnates will possess neutrally aligned hosts. They abandon such hosts immediately upon arrival of a more appropriately aligned individual.

Good-aligned minor incarnates form a symbiotic relationship with their hosts and never attempt to force a host to behave a certain way or perform a particular action. A good-aligned minor incarnate never possesses or attempts to remain in a host if the possession is detrimental to or threatens the host's health or well-being. The following are descriptions of the good-aligned minor incarnates:

Charity: Charity incarnates are lawful good and dwell throughout the Seven Heavens and Twin Paradises. Their preferred hosts are the archons and the Zoveri. Possession by a charity incarnate increases both the host's Wisdom and Charisma by 1 point each. The host also becomes immune to greed, envy, or berserk rage, whether caused by natural or magical sources. A charity incarnate immediately leaves a host who fails to spare the life of a surrendering foe (even if such a surrender causes extreme difficulties for the host).

Courage: These incarnates are found throughout the upper planes. Courage incarnates are neutral good in alignment, and their favorite hosts are the einheriar. Possession by a courage incarnate increases the host's Constitution and Charisma by 1 each. Also, the host becomes immune to fear of any type, such as *fear* spells, the *fear* auras of dragons or other creatures, fear caused by a symbol spell, etc. Possession by a courage incarnate makes the host fearless but not stupid and reckless. The host still intellectually understands the dangers confronting him and takes appropriate actions to deal with them. Courage incarnates never possess any evil creature; should a host change to an evil alignment, either freely or by magical means, the courage incarnate departs.

Hope: Hope incarnates can be found throughout the upper planes and are the most numerous of all the incarnates. The aasimon are the preferred hosts for these chaotic-good creatures. Possession by a hope incarnate renders the host immune to despair or hopelessness, whether from natural or magical causes such as produced by *symbol* spells. Possession by this incarnate raises the host's Charisma by 1, and the host gains a +1 on all saving throws.

Faith: Like hope, these lawful-good incarnates are found throughout the upper planes. Devas, planetars, and solars are their favorite hosts. They prefer only paladins or lawful-good clerics when on the Prime Material plane. Possession by a faith incarnate raises the host's Wisdom by 2 and his Charisma by 1. It also raises the host's Strength by 2 (hence the expression, "the strength of his faith"). Faith incarnates also render their hosts immune to magical alignment change, such as caused by *helm of opposite alignment* or any other devices, traps, or spells that alter alignment.

Justice: Justice incarnates are lawful good and reside in the Seven Heavens, preferring them to all other planes. They are the fewest in number of all good minor incarnates. They prefer only agathinon, light aasimons, and archons as hosts. On the Prime Material plane, they possess only warriors (especially paladins) and priests of lawful-good alignment. Possession by a

Incarnates

justice incarnate raises Wisdom, Intelligence, and Charisma by 1 each. Justice incarnates will not tolerate unjust actions by their hosts. Any attempt at cheating, stealing, or lack of fair play by the host causes the justice incarnate to depart immediately.

Temperance: Temperance incarnates are the most unusual of their kind because they are found primarily on one of the middle planes, Nirvana. However, they are occasionally found in the Beastlands and the Seven Heavens. These neutral-good incarnates prefer mediators, animal lords, and warden beasts as hosts. On the Prime Material plane, they favor druids as hosts. Temperance incarnates never possess evil hosts. They do not raise or lower any ability scores, but the host gains +2 on all saving throws vs. *charm*, *confusion*, *emotion*, *fear*, *spook*, *symbol*, and *taunt* spells.

Wisdom: Wisdom incarnates are neutral good but are found primarily in the Seven Heavens. They prefer the nocturals as hosts, but on the Prime Material plane they willingly possess any good-aligned priest. Possession by a wisdom incarnate increases Wisdom by 1. These incarnates will not possess any evil hosts except as a last resort, and will immediately depart from an evil host at the first opportunity.

On their home planes, evil minor incarnates prefer hosts of an alignment like their own. However, on the Prime Material plane, they prefer those of an alignment opposite to their own. These incarnates do not care about their host's well being and have a purely parasitic relationship with the host. Evil incarnates enjoy forcing hosts on the Prime Material plane to commit acts the host would normally find reprehensible and repugnant. Because he is forced to act against his will, the host's Dexterity is lowered by 2, representing the host's resistance to the incarnate's control. This penalty is suffered by all hosts of evil incarnates and is in addition to any other penalties. If an incarnate kills or harms a host, it moves on remorselessly to the next. The following are descriptions of the evil minor incarnates:

Anger: Anger incarnates are neutral evil and are found throughout the lower planes. They possess any intelligent baatezu, tanar'ri, yugoloth, or gehreleth. On the Prime Material plane, they prefer warriors of good alignment as hosts and are particularly fond of rangers and paladins. If such a host is unavailable, they possess good or neutrally aligned animals or creatures, such as dogs, elephants, bears, lions, etc. Such incarnates are often the cause of a usually tame or timid creature suddenly raging through a marketplace and attempting to kill anything near it. Possession by anger increases Strength by 1, but decreases both Intelligence and Charisma by 2 each.

Covetousness: These neutral-evil beings are found primarily in Gehenna and Hades and favor yugoloths as their hosts. As Gehenna and Hades are planes of uncontrolled, unimaginable greed, the yugoloths there provide these incarnates with purposeless, endless avarice on which to feed. On the Prime Material plane, they may possess any class or creature of any alignment. They prefer strong hosts (such as dragons) capable of amassing and protecting huge hoards. A being possessed by this incarnate is often misdiagnosed as having "gold fever" or are said to have "turned into a miser." The host has both Wisdom and Charisma reduced by 2.

Envy: These vile creatures are the least in number but most insidious of the incarnates. They are chaotic evil and can be found on any of the lower planes. They use any intelligent creatures as hosts. On the Prime Material plane, they prefer demihumans who have been discriminated against (especially the short gnomes, dwarves, and halflings) as hosts. There are no obvious or overt signs that the host is possessed by this

incarnate. Once possessed, the host begins a slow, devious, and underhanded campaign of rumor and backbiting against those close to him. They insinuate that others do not deserve the items or equipment they own and belittle any abilities others possess or accomplishments they have achieved. The host is perpetually jealous of others' abilities and treasure. The envy-possessed individual secretly attempts to lose, ruin, or destroy the treasure of others (especially magical items). Possession lowers Wisdom and Charisma by 2 each.

Gluttony: Gluttony incarnates can be found on most of the lower planes. They are neutral evil and prefer to use bargura, vaporighu, pit fiends, and yugoloths as hosts. On the Prime Material plane, they prefer settled individuals to adventurers, but are fond of using wereboars as hosts. If in need, they will possess any being of any alignment. Gluttony-possessed individuals are characterized by their constant overindulgence in food and drink. The overindulgence will continue regardless of the effects on the host's health or well-being. The host is incessantly ravenous and begs, borrows, or steals food (or money to get food). Possession by gluttony reduces Wisdom and Charisma by 2. The host gains 2d4+4 lbs. per week after possession by this incarnate. The host's Dexterity, Strength, and Constitution are reduced by 2 each for every 100 pounds so gained.

Lust: The layers of the Abyss are home to the chaotic-evil lust incarnates, the succubi and alu-fiends being their favorite hosts. On the Prime Material plane, these incarnates prefer chaste, good-aligned humans, but they may possess any creature of any alignment. Possession by lust increases Charisma by 1 but decreases Intelligence and Wisdom by 2 each. Lust-possessed individuals know only the overwhelming desperation of unfulfilled and unfulfilling desire.

Pride: These lawful-evil incarnates are found primarily in the Nine Hells. Their favored hosts, in order of preference, are greater, lesser, and least baatezu. The overweening arrogance of the baatezu makes them susceptible to pride incarnates. On the Prime Material plane, pride incarnates prefer human and demihuman spell-casters as hosts. The pride-possessed host is vain and haughty in the extreme and tends to treat everyone as a lowly servant. Pride-possessed individuals quickly grow angry with anyone who fails to act in a subservient manner or acknowledge the host's exalted position and obvious superiority. Possession by pride lowers the host's Wisdom by 1 and his Intelligence and Charisma by 2 each.

Sloth: The neutral-evil sloth incarnates dwell throughout the lower planes. They have no favorite host (perhaps they are themselves too lazy to choose) and possess whatever is available. They possess any being of any alignment while on the Prime Material plane. Those possessed by a sloth incarnate become extremely lazy and slipshod in all matters. The host constantly shirks his duties and never does his fair share of the work. This can be dangerous in adventuring parties, as the possessed individual is often found asleep on guard duty and will neglect equipment and weapons. If a wizard, the host disregards the necessity of memorizing spells. If a priest, he neglects his meditations and prayers. The host's Strength, Dexterity, and Wisdom are each reduced by 2.

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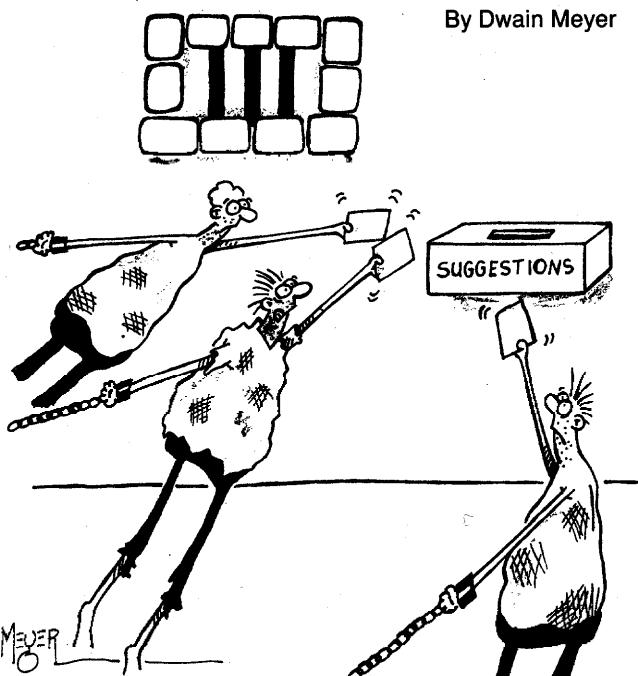
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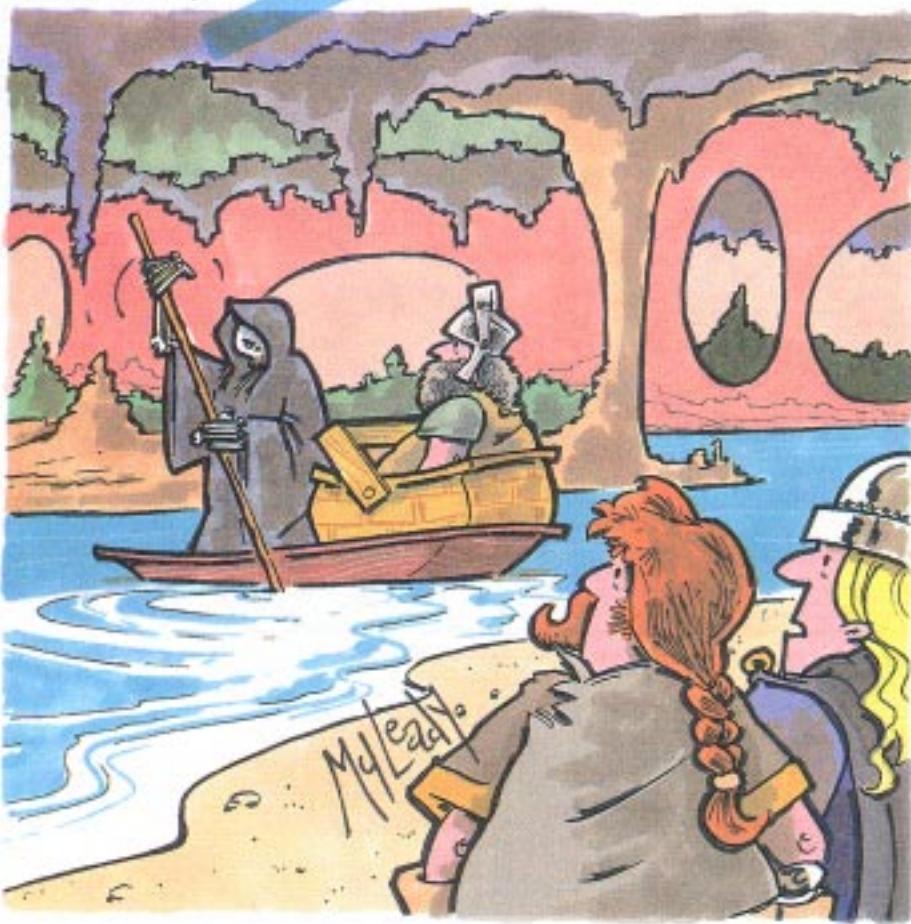
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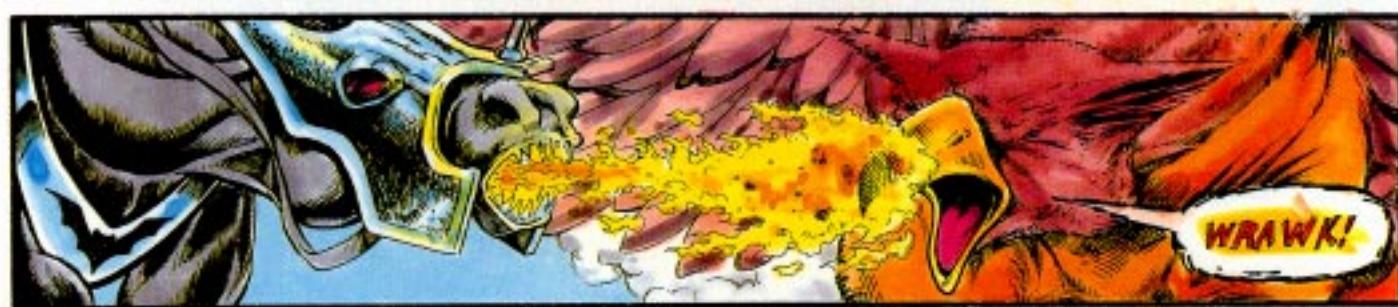
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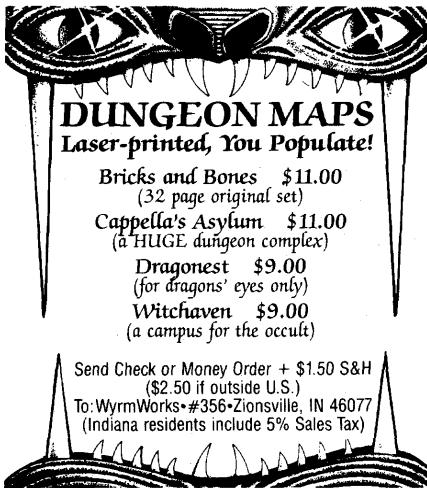
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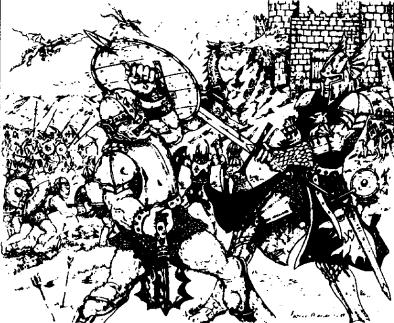
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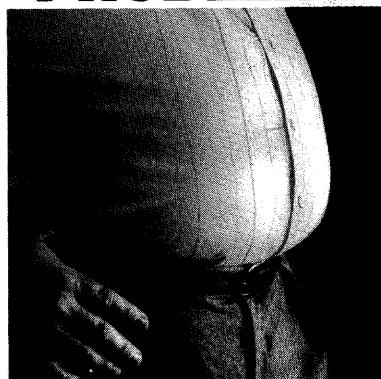
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Mechanic (Soldiers and Swords)

Happiness is a warm sextant and blunderbuss

Much uncertainty still exists about the future of lead miniatures manufacturing. By the time you read this, many major miniatures companies will have begun using alternative metals. In fact, some of the lead figures in this month's column may already be converted by the time you read this. According to some companies, the new metal may have better detail; I'll reserve my opinion until I see it. This still leaves a number of foreign companies producing lead figures, as well as some American companies that fill important niches too small for larger companies to handle. For many of you in states contemplating lead bans (especially New York, which expects to put its lead ban into effect in June), this may be your last chance to legally buy these figures. Take advantage of it—tomorrow is close.

You will notice a lack of painted figures

in the photos this month. The printing process leads to a loss of clarity in the magazine photos, and in some cases the photos do not do the figures or paint jobs justice. After discussions with the editors, I have decided to try a couple of columns using primed figures to see if we can improve the observable detail in the magazine. Our one painted figure was sent to us by Soldiers and Swords, so we couldn't waste the work. Now, on to the figures.

Miniatures' product ratings

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**

Poor
Below average
Average
Above average
Excellent

Soldiers and Swords

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H004 Mechanician

This 25-mm scale figure is only 24 mm at eye level. The figure has an oblong base with cleaning marks where the company attempted to level the bottom. My figure was slightly wobbly but required only a small amount of work to fix. The mold line runs evenly down the sides, and what little flash there was could be easily cleaned by a fingernail and a knife.

This figure contains a wealth of detail that makes it challenging to paint. His footwear looks like army boots with ribbed socks or leggings. A trenchcoat reaches his ankles, realistically molded to capture a breeze. The front pockets have a variety of tools in them, such as wrenches, screwdriver handles, a battery tester or similar tool, and so on. Special touches include a rag in the right lower pocket and the pocket liner in the upper left. His right hand holds what looks like an old flintlock pistol, and the left hand holds a sextant.

His backpack is filled with different objects, some of which are of unknown use. A coiled rope hangs from the pack's bottom. The facial detail is fair. He wears glasses or goggles, and he has a slightly flattened nose and buck teeth. His hair is slicked back, and individual strands can be seen.

This is a very good figure and is highly recommended for a number of SF systems, from FASA's DOCTOR WHO* game to GDW's SPACE: 1889* system. The clothing fits into the Victorian era (paint the coat denim). This is well worth the \$1.35 price tag.

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0118 WARHAMMER* Battle Magic ****½

When I did the review on the WARHAMMER FANTASY BATTLES* game, I was reluctant to comment on the magic system, stating that it was relatively weak and the main magic system was yet to come. Now it has come, and it was worth the wait. Games Workshop has once again managed to present a full box load of items.

When you open the box, you are immediately struck by the number of heavy card-stock counters and spell cards. This game has a system that divides wizards' spells by the color of their college and by the human opponent that uses them—e.g., Chaos, skaven, and orks. Each group has a total of 10 cards except Chaos, which has four per deity. Each card includes a description of both the spell and its effect and duration. There are a total of 135 different spells in sheets of 12 or groups of three.

More spice is added through the use of 111 magical-item cards that in most cases must be used by Champions or other members of the military units. Each card has a description of the item and a brief history, as well as a point cost that must be met. Many of these items have restrictions as to who can use them. The only thing missing that would be nice for beginners is an illustration of the item mentioned. These cards are also printed on heavy stock and resemble parchment on the description side.

There are a number of heavy, colorful templates and tokens that designate targets or can be used to judge the result of certain spells. Among these is a large green foot belonging to the orkish god Gork, a chaos Firestorm of Tzeentch, a skaven Vermintide, and even a Sun of Xereus card for the good guys. Warpstone and gate counters complete the colorful array of over 64 individual pieces.

Power for magic spells and different side effects, such as Dispel or Rebound, are printed on 36 plastic-covered cards resembling playing cards. These cards are shuffled and passed around at the beginning of each magic phase to determine whether or not you can power your spells.

The rule book is 65 pages long and very well done. It starts out with an inventory of contents, including illustrations, so you can always make sure that your set is complete. The book then goes into an explanation of magic in the WARHAMMER world, with its history and uses. Each of the individual colleges is examined, and



Lord Soth (Ral Partha Enterprises)

its strengths and weaknesses are shown. The book then examines the races and what magicians or magic they can use, along with explanations as to why you can or cannot do certain things. The book moves through the game sequence and talks about the impact of daemons, familiars, and acolytes on the magic-users, as well as possible problems. Spells and magical items are covered individually by type and class. Finally, the book contains tables that can be photocopied and describes products that are available. The whole book is filled with line drawings, black-and-white illustrations, and fiction to help you understand the rules better.

The only reason that this product did not get five stars is that Games Workshop has excluded a number of players by using a particular marketing strategy, in that many of the spells require that you have specific Games Workshop figures for those spells to work. While good gamers can always fix these kinds of "problems," it puts many people with low budgets or limited access to hobby shops in a position where they could not play the game outside of their house. It also enhances and encourages the purist mindset that may help the sales of a company, but damages the hobby and the recruitment of new members.

This is a quality piece of merchandise with the one major flaw noted above as its only detraction. This is highly recommended for committed WARHAMMER Games Workshop customers, but others should be prepared for compromise. The game sells for \$34.99 each.

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c/o Minifigs
1/5 Graham Rd., Southampton
UNITED KINGDOM SO2 0AX

10-566 Lord Soth's Charge

One of the most anguished of DRAGONLANCE® saga characters was Lord Soth, who forsook his solemn vows as a knight to trudge the path of evil and betrayal. He has been sculpted in both the DRAGONLANCE Villains and the RAVENLOFT® boxed sets of Ral Partha miniatures, but Lord Soth's Charge now gives us accurate models of his retainers and an awesome undead unit.

The set comes as 31 different lead parts which, when assembled, gives 12 mounted undead knights plus Lord Soth. The knights are mounted on nightmares (spectral horses from the AD&D® game), of which there are three different groups of four. All the nightmares are galloping, with eight of the beasts having their forelegs in the air supported by a small plume of lead, and the other four having the right front hoof firmly planted. The horses are better fed than most nightmares, as they are skinny for horses but have no ribs showing. The main difference between them is the tack used on each horse. Four horses each have a regular leather-strap harness, four each have a single chain and medallion on the neck, and four each have multiple chains and a detailed medallion with what looks like a skull. The beasts all have manes done in ringlets, and their heads look a little too



Sir Bors de Ganys the Good (Thunderbolt Mountain)

big for their bodies. All mouths are open in snarls. Facial features are excellent. The tails stream out behind. All have the same well-detailed oval bases. The horses are very, very good, but each came with a sprue going from mid-horse to base. This sprue needs to be removed with great care so as not to break the legs.

There are actually three different knight figures, although all share many similarities. Each has skeletal feet hanging without stirrups and about three-quarters armor coverage on the lower legs. All armor is highly detailed, consisting of breastplates and shoulder guards, chain mail on the lower half of each body down to the upper thigh bones, helmets with plumes in different positions, and forearm guards with the left hand being protected by plate. The skull faces range from mouth closed to open in screams of defiance. The knights are armed with either swords or spears. There was some flash, but it was easier to clean than I first thought it would be.

Lord Soth is mounted on a fully barded nightmare. Chain mail goes to the horse's knees, and plate protects the horse's face, neck, and back. Lord Soth clutches a scepter/mace in his left hand, while his right hand guides his horse. His cloak and helmet plume flows out behind him, and his ornate armor is visible through the scarf and clasp on his chest. His slightly slotted visor allows no glimpse of his face.

This set is well worth the \$26.95 price tag and is a big enough unit to be used in just about any fantasy miniatures combat system.

Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

656 E. McMillan
Cincinnati OH 45206-1991

Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

70 Harcourt St.
Newark, Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM NG 241 R4

3011 Sir Bors de Ganys the Good ****½

This nine-piece, lead-free kit is scaled to 25 mm. When completed, it gives you mounted and standing figures with a variety of weapons. The bases have slightly pebbled surfaces that should be easy to paint. The large rectangular base for the horse had two holes that fit the horse's trimmed pegs well, but they needed trimming on the sides. The square single-figure base had holes that were slightly large but needed little side trimming.

The standing figure consists of a knight entirely clad in chain mail, except for a helm that has a vision slit and air holes. The knees are covered by plate protectors. A long split surcoat, cinched by an ornate leather belt and a buckle, is puffed out as if in a breeze. His left hand supports a shield engraved with a lion, crown, and fleur-de-lis. An ornate sheath hangs from his left side; his right hand is cupped to hold a weapon from the weapon set, which contains two swords, an axe, and a lance. You need sharp wire cutters to remove the weapons from their sprue, as they are made of a very hard metal resistant to damage. The minimal flash is easily cleaned with a knife.

The mounted knight has a cloth-barded horse. A light mold line runs along the horse's back. The tack is good, except for

the solid reign structure under the chin. The mounted knight is identical to the standing version, except that his lower half is molded to the horse and the upper half must be glued on. Pre-fit the parts as you may need to trim the joining peg. The knight figure also has an open hand to hold a weapon.

The horse's base is the only real problem that I see. An excellent job was done portraying a gallop, but the horse is not stable in its present form. Detail is excellent, and this is a highly recommended figure, even if a bit pricey at \$6.95 each.

Denizen Miniatures
c/o Stone Mountain Miniatures
P.O. Box 594
Broomfield CO 80038

DSF 332 Heavy Weapons Squad ****

Assault and heavy-weapons teams are integral parts of any modern army, providing the extra firepower to breach barriers or contain attacks. Most SF games prefer to put these types of troops in heavy power armor, but the cost would be prohibitive for small national budgets. This five-piece, four-figure pack represents a non-powered squad of heavy-weapons space marines. These figures are lead-free and scaled to 25 mm, but the troops are all different heights as they would really be. The figures are mounted on small hex bases with no surface detail except for pitting and easily removed mold lines. All are dressed in smooth kevlarlike vests that have a number of places to attach items, and all wear multipocket fatigues. Both females wear straight combat boots, while the men wear boots with lower legs and knee protection.

Figure #1 has a light, laser, and tracker mounted on the armor behind his shoulder. A helmet with chin strap and built-in communicator covers his head, with a microphone visible in front. Spare grenades and other items adorn his suit. A belt supports a holstered pistol, food and water pouches, a communications center, a power pack and cable, and other pouches. His arms are bare from the vest out; his right hand clenches a European-type assault gun, while his left throws a grenade. The mold line is easy to remove except in the folds of the clothes.

Figure #2 is a female with a laser cannon; she has no extra gear. Both hands are at the guard position with a large mountable cannon. The gun, which slightly resembles a German heavy machine gun from World War II, is supported by twin straps over the chest plate, secured at the shoulders. Her arms are bare. Her communicator piece is secured to a Rambo-style headband. Some mold lines require extra care to remove.

Figure #3 comes in two parts, one being a right arm with a short sleeve

“Whoever fights monsters
should see to it that in
the process he does not
become a monster.”

-Nietzsche



 Mayfair
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Heavy Weapons Squad (Denizen Miniatures)



Dwarf Halberdiers (Heartbreaker Miniatures)

preparing to fire a rocket that looks like an RPG-7, and the other being the rest of the kneeling figure. She has no extra adornment except for food and water pouches on her belt. Her long hair is covered by a helmet that has the only visor in the group.

The last figure is a male over 6' tall. He has a tracking and targeting system on his shoulders and two grenades on his chest. A number of spare pouches, bulging pockets, and a water jug in back make this a busy figure. His comm set is helmet mounted. His weapon is supported by a strap over his back and shoulders.

These figures are useful for Leading Edge's ALIENS* RPG, GDW's TRAVELLER* system in any of its forms, and any other medium-tech sci-fi game. The only detracting feature of these figures is that they look very thin and have the sunken eyes, gaunt cheeks, and haggard looks of

long-time combat veterans. They are recommended at \$5.95 pe

Heartbreaker Miniatures

Paoli Tech. Ent. Center
19 E. Central Ave.
Paoli PA 19301

Gamecraft

A-16 Gardners Row
Business Center, Ltd., Liverpool
UNITED KINGDOM L3 6TJ

220 Dwarf Halberdiers

This three-dwarf set is scaled for the larger 28-mm style and is lead-free. The figures use the square, black, slotted bases common to many of the larger scales. Included with these figures is an additional axe, sword, and shield.

Figure #1 is probably from a militia unit. He wears boots, pants, and a chain-

mail shirt over a regular shirt. A belt around his waist supports a pouch on the left and a large sack on the right. His only weapon is a long spear with a large head, held in his right hand. He shakes his left fist at an enemy. His beard is belt length, and his hair is split with a part in the middle showing a furrowed brow, bushy eyebrows, and squinting eyes. There was no flash, and the mold line was almost nonexistent.

Figure #2 is dressed almost exactly the same as Figure #1, though the chain-mail shirt is longer. The figure is armed with a beaked axe on a long pole, held in both hands. The crown of his head is bald, and what hair he has is shoulder length or longer. His beard is cropped at the bottom in a straight line. His eyes are half closed. Figure #3 is dressed in a full-length mail coat complete with long sleeves, and chain-mail boots. A belt support a pouch and sack, and both hands clasp a halberd as if to stop someone. The neatly trimmed beard and hair and the serious look clearly identify him as a home guard.

The only thing about these figures that I can't get used to is the large-proportioned heads on these dwarves. The longer I look at these figures, the more I think of the AD&D game's duergar dwarves; these figures can thus provide you with excellent evil dwarfs. With lack of flash and mold lines, they are well recommended at \$5.95 per pack.

5010 Wererat Champ

This lead-free figure is definitely bigger than the normal 25-mm scale, measuring 30 mm from foot to eye. The figure also has a plastic slotted base like the above dwarves, and no trimming was needed for the figure to fit in the base.

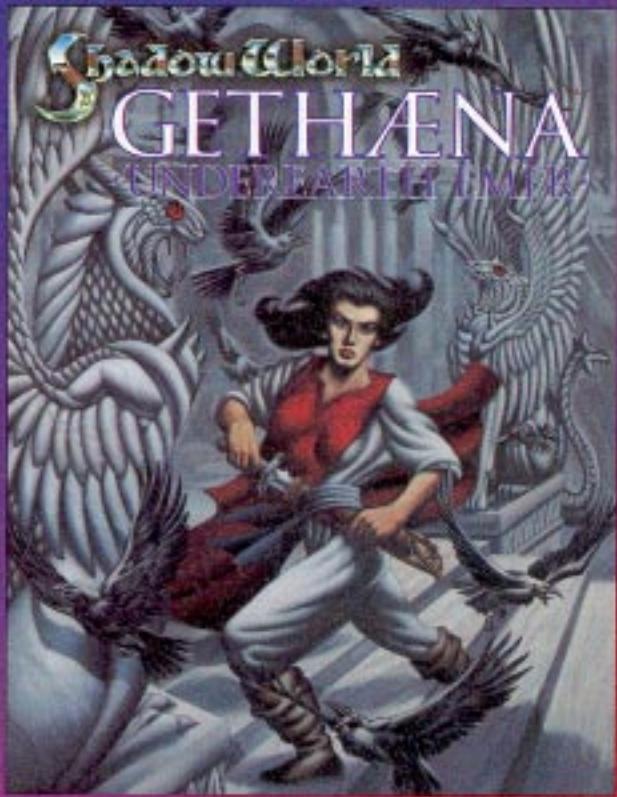
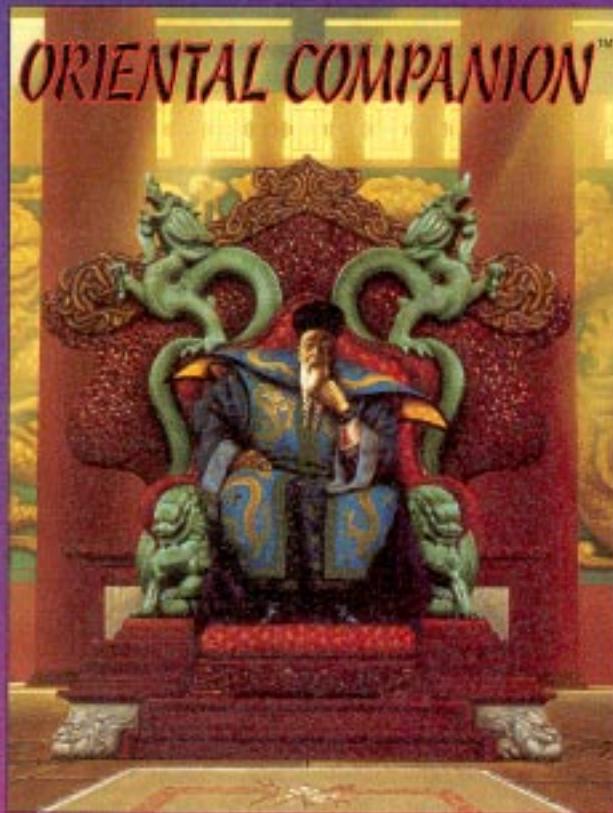
The figure wears long, flowing, tattered robes that drag on the ground. Over this, the wererat has a mangled chain-mail shirt that is missing part of the left arm. A formed plate protects the abdomen, while a breastplate and connected backplate provide protection to the upper body. A thin belt holds a pouch and supports the armor. Two chains dangle from the belt. Its left arm is protected by a buckler and spiked knuckles, while his bare left hand holds a strangely designed square sword or weird mace. His head is covered by a bascinet. His teeth are set in a sneer with a minimum of detail except the front buck teeth. His right ear is cocked slightly, and his left is pointed. A thick mane of hair falls from the back of his head to his hairless tail.

My only objections to this figure are its size and the odd sword. If you have skaven or wererat troops in your WARHAMMER or AD&D miniatures army, you need this figure (only \$1.85 each).

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Werewolf Champ (Heartbreaker Miniatures)

Fantasenes

Box P
Pine Plains, NY 12567

1-09 Round Tables and Stools

This set has lead to it and is scaled to 25 mm. It consists of 12 stools, three pedestals, and three slat-board tables. The stools are actually small bench seats.

Every piece has some flash or a mold line. The pedestals are placed under the tabletops, but each may still leave a gap when joined to a top. This gap needs care in filling, especially if you want to keep the board gaps and wood grain intact.

This was not one of the better sets I have seen in this series, but with work it will come out nicely. It's a little high at \$5.95 per set for this level of quality.

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C1022c Druid/Ranger

While many people maintain that there is no such thing as a druid/ranger in TSR's AD&D game, there is now a figure laying claim to the title. This lead figure with circular base is tall at 25 mm to the eyes. The base bottom needs filing, and the plastic base had a slight crack.

The figure is dressed in hip boots, tights, and a leather jerkin that almost reaches her boots. No cleavage shows on this figure in spite of its obviously female shape. A wide belt with a simple buckle supports a large knife and a pouch. Cross straps hold a full quiver of arrows in a leather-laced holder. Detail work showing sewing marks is excellent, with clear engraving. Her bow is wrapped securely, protected from the elements until it is

needed. Again, the lacing is clear. Both arms are covered by the blouse arms, and she wears leather gauntlets. Her left hand is set as if to part branches in front of her, while her right holds a two-edged sword, which came slightly bent.

One small problem lowered the figure's rating. The right side of her face is well done, but the left side has a defect that looks like either a mold problem or a mold shift. Either way, you must work on the face to get it even. The hair is very well done, as is the long cloak. This is a really nice miniature. If you don't mind working on it, this is a must-have figure at \$1.79 each, if you have female characters.

That brings us to a close for this month. If you have any questions, you may call me, MWThF 2 P.M.-10 P.M. CST, or weekends 10 A.M.-5 P.M. CST, at (708) 336-0790. You are more likely to get an answer if you call, as I am often kept from writing for medical reasons. If you must write, contact me at: Robert Bigelow, c/o Friend's Hobby, 1411 Washington St., Waukegan IL 60085. See you next month.



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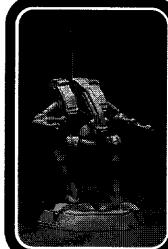
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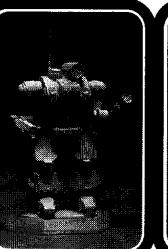
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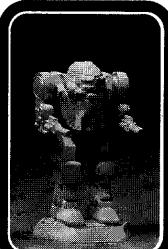


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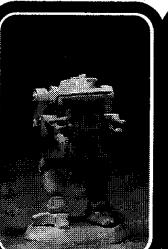


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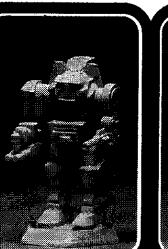
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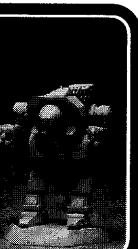
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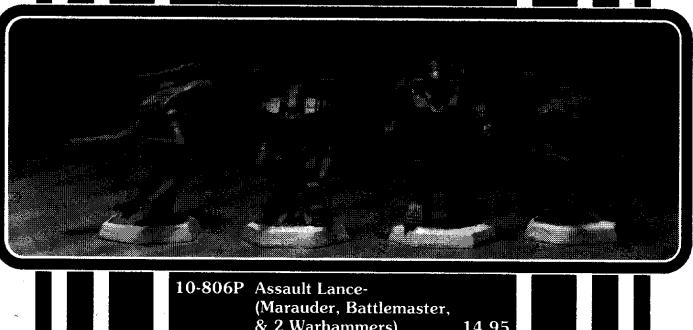
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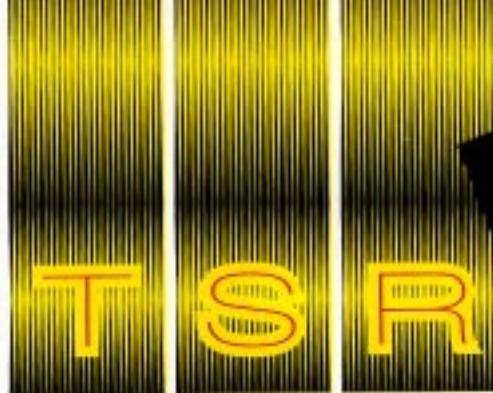
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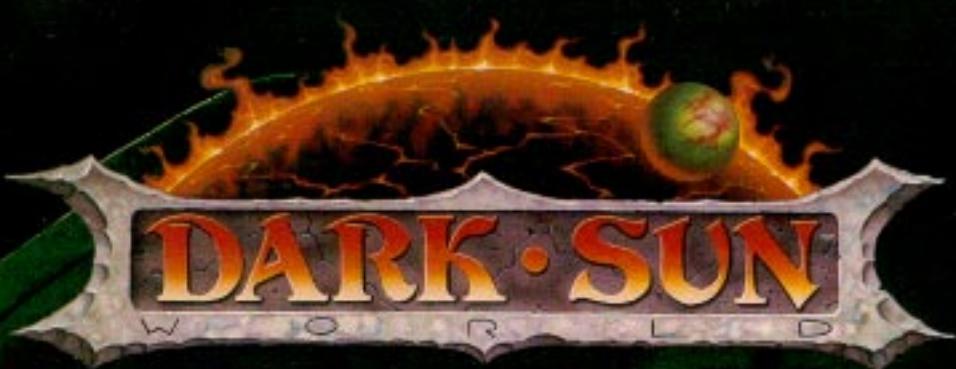
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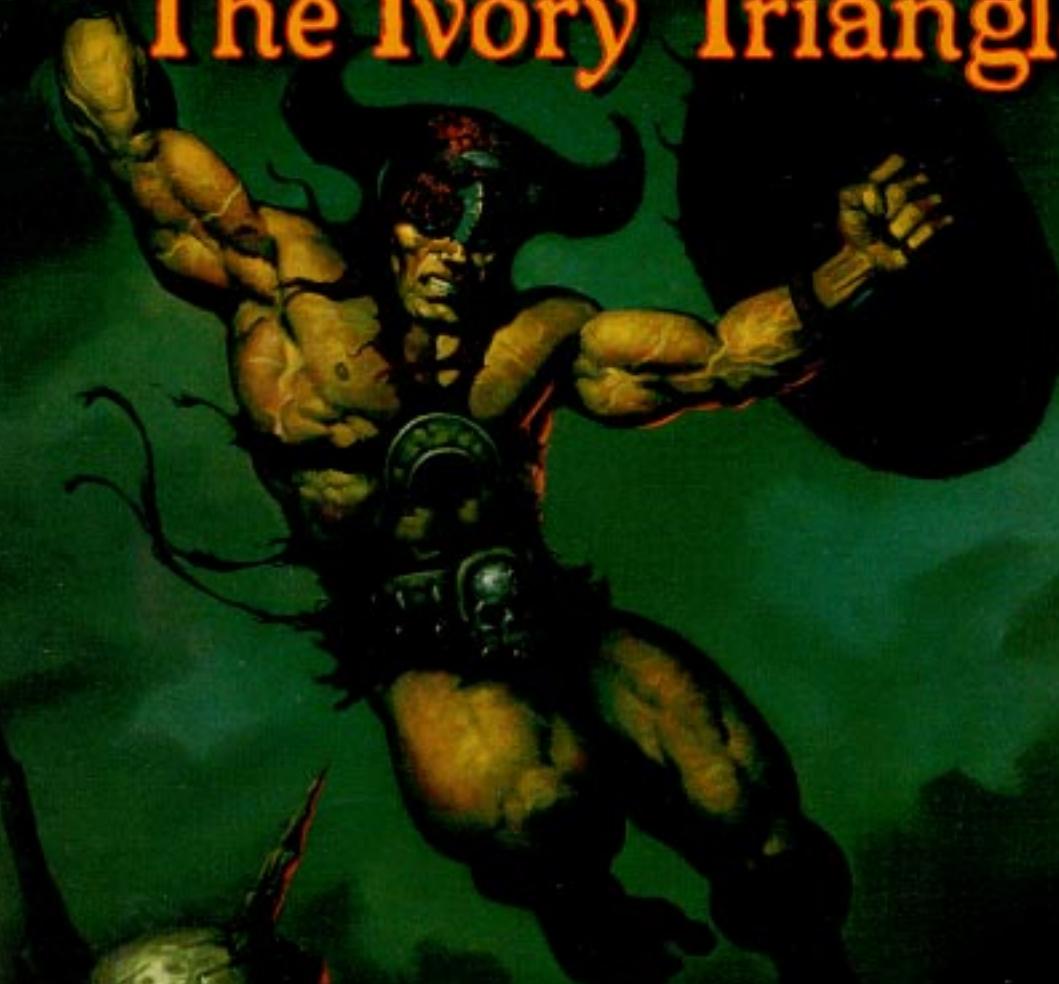
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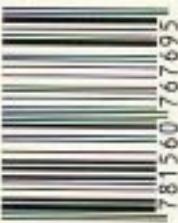


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